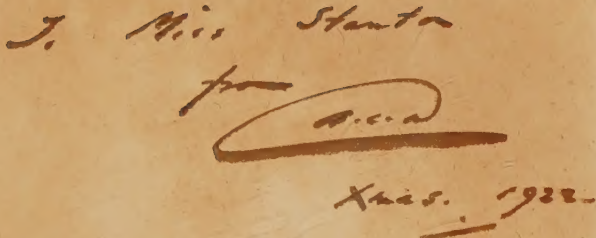

THE AVON AND SHAKESPEARE'S COUNTRY

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

ROUND ABOUT WILTSHIRE

THE ROMANCE OF NORTHUMBERLAND

TRINITY CHURCH, STRATFORD-ON-AVON

THE AVON AND SHAKESPEARE'S COUNTRY

BY

A. G. BRADLEY

AUTHOR OF "THE ROMANCE OF NORTHUMBERLAND" ETC.

WITH THIRTY ILLUSTRATIONS IN COLOUR BY
A. R. QUINTON

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PREFACE

IN regard to the slightly ampler space devoted in these pages to the lower and less known than to the higher and more familiar reaches of the Avon, I need not support such a procedure by any pious opinion of my own, that, upon the whole, the former are the most consistently engaging, and associated with more inspiring landscape and no less rich in historic association. For ample justification will be afforded by a mere reference to the voluminous output of works of all kinds which, for obvious reasons, have dealt with the immediate Stratford district from almost every conceivable point of view.

Furthermore, I have been emboldened to fancy that an intimacy of old standing with America and Americans has conduced to a more sympathetic understanding of the impressions that most England makes on our kinsmen from across the Atlantic, who form so important a feature in the tide of travel that sets annually to the banks of Avon. Though with no especial design in these pages on the transatlantic reader of whatever allegiance, I have indulged in the hope

that they may be the means of persuading some to extend their Stratford pilgrimage a little farther, and make time to descend the valley of the Avon with as much leisure as may be to its mouth at Tewkesbury, and gain thereby as felicitous a glimpse of genuine, unspoiled rural England as could anywhere, perhaps, be found.

A. G. B.

Rye,
Sussex

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THE AVON AND SHAKESPEARE'S COUNTRY

CHAPTER I

TEWKESBURY

THE composition of the picture in which Tewkesbury forms the central feature, as unfolded to the traveller descending the Severn valley, is singularly felicitous. For the mile or so of uncompromising meadow flats, bare of either house or tree or fence, which marks the confluence of the Severn and the Avon between the low bordering slopes, seems to make for the better setting and greater glory of the noble pile that rises upon the farther edge. Indeed, the scenery hereabouts is altogether laid upon a broad canvas, as befits the greatest of English rivers, drawing within measurable distance of the tide. The long range of the Cotswolds forges up from the far south-east and, drawing within a few miles of Tewkesbury, swerves away to the south-west and the bolder heights of Cleeve, thence dropping in successive and gradually fading headlands into the verdant plain which spreads from Tewkesbury to Gloucester, and through which the Severn meanders seaward. Isolated heights of no mean altitude, outliers of the

Cotswolds, rise picturesquely and inconsequently behind the old town, and not far away from it, while up the tributary river to the eastward, the huge humpy mass of Bredon fills the eye and proclaims itself, as most assuredly it is, the dominant feature in the whole Avon valley. Along the southern bank of the smaller river, and no distance from its mouth, the ancient little town extends itself between the same limits practically as marked it two or three centuries ago : while at the western end, rising above a girdle of foliage, the long massive nave of the abbey, surmounted by one of the finest Norman towers in England, makes a scene that seems to celebrate with singular distinction the union of two famous streams.

Tewkesbury is hardly the place you would of choice resort to if it had been raining for a week. It is one that deals notoriously in floods, and even in photography does not shrink from representing itself as given over wholly to the dominion of great waters. The natives show you watermarks treasured in their back gardens, or on their kitchen doors, touched by the combined efforts of Severn and the Avon on various memorable occasions, each of which serve as mental finger-posts in the flight of a time, and help to place the date of a birth, a marriage, a new curate, or an attack of influenza. Nor would it be well to fix on Tewkesbury for a month of sunny June or July days, since it is one of the hottest little places within my knowledge. Indeed, the general atmosphere of the lower Severn valley is perhaps as ill-adapted to the strenuous life, for the alien at least, as any in England, while Tewkesbury itself, lying on the river flat, has not a particle of shade worth mentioning within its venerable limits, except the pleasant groves that screen the abbey precincts. But as here you may

not walk or sit upon the well-kept turf beneath them, and cannot well lie upon the pavement walks to any comfort or advantage, I should not recommend this interesting little town to those who follow the pipe-and-hammock, or book-and-campstool method of encountering such after all but moderate suns as shine upon the Briton. As few readers of this little work are ever likely to consider the question of a month in Tewkesbury, these discouraging comments are no doubt irrelevant and only excusable from the fact that, despite the seeming paradox, I spent an exceedingly pleasant one myself beneath the shadow, speaking figuratively, of course, after what I have said, of its noble pile. I spent it, too, with the jolly miller of the ancient abbey mill and his even jollier wife. Not in the mill, the interior of which, I must admit, has been shorn of all romance in the exigencies of modern science, but in a snug and modest cot hard by, whose garden strip bent downwards to Shakespeare's Avon, purling just here below the mill wheel, as if it had come from Wales rather than from Warwickshire —a garden strip that, like the rest, had of course its floodmarks, which happily were not even threatened in those long and sunny days.

Speaking, however, in all gravity, Tewkesbury is an admirable centre for exploring a district rich in history, in fine churches, in ancient houses, in village architecture, and much above the average, over a radius of a dozen or fifteen miles, in physical beauty. There are two hotels, the one Georgian and sedate of complexion, where I should imagine the more fastidious souls would be happy and at ease. There are others that rank high among the black and white Tudor buildings of the west Midlands and the Border country, and are beautiful to behold, but more popular perhaps

with the merry tripper, who comes in shoals from the Midland towns to Tewkesbury in his active season. But when the wheels of his loaded chariots have whisked him away, or in the autumn, winter, and spring, when he is watching football matches in Birmingham, Tewkesbury is as if he had never been, and shows no sign of being itself anything whatever but an ancient market town, somewhat shorn of any little importance it may have had by the passing of railroads at a distance, for it is only linked to the main line by a branch. The town consists of three streets, which form a rude Y, and there is practically nothing more. It boasts, however, of more half-timbered Tudor houses for its size than any other town in this region of England from Cheshire to Gloucester, and from Warwick to the west limits of Hereford, which is so distinguished for them. I know all these towns, and should certainly give Tewkesbury, in this respect, the palm. But what is much more convincing, its rivals themselves are inclined to admit its superiority in their confidential moments. Tewkesbury has no suburbs, no outlying red brick villas worth mentioning. Its three streets end virtually where they ended in ancient times, and precipitate you almost without warning into the green fields. Its burghers live mostly over or beside their shops, and sometimes in houses that are a joy to behold. But Tewkesbury is not without self-consciousness and pride. It does not altogether follow these picturesque methods from belated habits. There has been some restoration, but generally by loving, careful, and knowledgeable hands. The town has no trade to speak of save a couple of flour mills on the Avon, but there is a civic sense of architectural continuity rare enough in England. In short, there is no expanding

industrial prospect whatever, and the enlightened native feels that, as a bit of old England in these feverish days of travel, the mission of his town, as well as its most promising industry, is to maintain that character as studiously as may be; to preserve, in short, a stage upon which the flamboyant modern, with his usually resounding presence, whether complacent motorist, or exuberant beanfeaster, may make survey of his complete antithesis, and himself supply a contrast between the then and now. This is a new resource and a worthy one by which, within the last two decades, many a sleepy old English town has in part repaired the loss of other vanished trades. It is not as lucrative as nails or gloves, boilers or boots. But it is steady, nay, even improving and independent of the world's commercial convulsions. It does not promote national wealth, with the squalid accessories and interludes of unemployment contingent on that process, except to the negative extent of keeping a certain amount of money in the country that would be spent on the foreigner, and perhaps of encouraging the latter to return an infinitesimal but increasing fraction of the enormous sums John Bull has in the past lavished upon him and his for like hospitalities.

It was like old times to me, if a few paltry years may be thus apostrophized and the phrase permitted in such a haunt of ancient heroes as Tewkesbury, to shake once again the mailed fist of Robert Fitzhamon, in whose company, to pursue still further such disrespectful metaphor, I had wandered so often and so far among the hills and castles of South Wales. That the conqueror of Glamorgan lay at Tewkesbury as the virtual builder of its great and powerful abbey, came back to me as a surprise with all the contrition

in this case incumbent on so inexcusable a lapse of memory. That the first Earl of Gloucester, the first bearer of a title whose successors for three centuries were for territorial reasons so often *primi inter pares* among the feudal nobility, should lie here is natural enough. How many of the thousands, however, who stand beside the chantry that a pious abbot of much later day erected to Fitzhamon's memory above his tomb, think of him otherwise than dimly as an Earl of Gloucester, a kinsman of the Conqueror's, as their guide-book tells them, who was killed in a battle in Normandy, in short, of small concern to Britons then or now. Pilgrims from beyond the Severn, however, who know anything at all, will see in the founder of Tewkesbury Abbey the conqueror of the land of Morgan, that fattest slice of Wales, which gave this Earldom of Gloucester, as its appanage, the excess of fighting strength that made it ever afterwards so unduly powerful. But this is a highly romantic story, of which a word may be said in a more appropriate place.

The germ of Tewkesbury is attributed to the planting of a rude church here in the end of the seventh century by one of the early Saxon devotees, by name Theocus, hence Theocus-bury and Tewkesbury. Soon afterwards a monastery of some sort was founded and endowed, which by the ninth century was of sufficient importance to be selected as the burial place of Brihtric, King of Mercia, whose wife, having poisoned most of his friends from jealousy or mere malignancy, at length gave her husband himself a dose in a fit of sheer abstraction. The Tewkesbury House was in the tenth century associated with the Benedictine monastery of Cranbourne, and how it fared during the ravages of the Danes no one may guess. There

is little concerning it worthy of mention here till it passed, after the Conquest, into Norman hands and arose in mightier guise and to a far greater measure of renown than in Saxon days it had ever aspired to. A curious tale that even Freeman's searching criticism and keen scent for fiction does not wholly reject belongs to the transfer of Tewkesbury Manor and its church patronage. Now at Hanley Castle, up the Severn towards Worcester, lived a Saxon thane also Brihtric, like the luckless king already spoken of, though I will not guarantee that their signatures were precisely identical. After the Conquest he was left, like many other Saxons in this part of the world, in possession of his manors, which included Tewkesbury. But Brihtric, in the time of Edward the Confessor, had been sent on a mission by that king to the court of the Earl of Flanders,and while there the earl's daughter, afterwards wife of the Conqueror, had shown a partiality for his handsome person, to which favour he committed the unforgettable insult of remaining wholly indifferent. When the lady ultimately came to England as William's wife, the hapless Brihtric had a bad time of it, was thrown into prison and stripped of the possessions he seemed in a fair way of retaining, among them Tewkesbury, which became royal property. Thence it passed in due course to William Rufus, who bestowed it on his father's friend, Robert Fitzhamon, Earl of Gloucester. Though the Avon is not in Glamorgan, the performance with which the founder of Tewkesbury is indelibly associated, and by the fame of which he lives to this day in Wales, as none of his contemporaries but the king himself have lived in England, was achieved from here.

Now in the time of Rufus no part of Wales was in any tangible sense as yet conquered, and the struggle

then began which was not completed for two hundred years, when the last Llewelyn was killed at Builth. The king's method was economical and simple, but gave rise to centuries of after complications. It consisted in licensing certain of his barons to adventure upon their own account and hold such territory as they could keep by the sword as independent Palatines, owing little more than nominal allegiance to the sovereign. Much of Mid and South Wales was thus annexed, and more or less precariously held in " lordships ", a form of division and government which lasted, with modification, till Henry the Eighth's time, when the " Marches ", as they were called, were made or grouped into counties. Morganwg, or Glamorgan, was the richest and fairest plum of all. The tale runs that in this instance divisions among its native chiefs provoked one of them to call in Norman aid in the person of Fitzhamon, Earl of Gloucester, with the result, to put an intricate story in brief, that the allies, having crushed the other party, the Normans turned upon their hosts and drove them into the hill portions, keeping the fair sea coast lowland for themselves. Fitzhamon had engaged the services of twelve knights with their followings, and these found their reward in the partition of Glamorgan in the manner related; and upon each sub-lordship the grantee built a castle, some of which, in ruins or rebuilt, are standing to this day. We know, moreover, all these knights' names, and several families still bearing them and boasting their blood were seated on the original grants till not very long ago. One or two are there even yet. Fitzhamon kept for himself the best share, that of Cardiff, setting up there a castle and a central government. And he remained the overlord of all Glamorgan, a position which became annexed

to the Earldom of Gloucester. And as the Glamorgan-Norman families were always fighting the half subdued Welsh and sometimes one another, a swarm of hardy, trained soldiers—Anglo-Normans, and as time went on reconciled or hired Welshmen—were at the service of the great baronial house.

Fitzhamon's headquarters were at Gloucester Castle, but he and his successors had also what the chronicler implies was a stately house at Tewkesbury, on the site known as Holme Castle, close to the abbey. Fitzhamon died of wounds received in battle abroad in 1197; but he lived to see the great monastery and church sufficiently completed to admit of nearly sixty monks being transferred thither from Cranbourne, which henceforward became a cell of Tewkesbury. The abbey was dedicated with great ceremonial in the year 1123. Fitzhamon in the meantime had left no son, and his daughter Mabel, probably the greatest heiress in England, was bestowed by Henry the First on his eldest natural son Robert, by his ward, the beautiful Nesta, daughter of Rhys ap Tudor, and afterwards wife of Gerald de Windsor. This lady is known as the "Helen of Wales", and with good reason, for seas of blood were shed on her account in that country. But I must check these excursions across the Severn, only noting by the way that when this practical young woman, Mabel of Gloucester, heard that the bastard Robert had only one name, she is said to have remarked that as he was taking her for what she had and not for what she was, he ought at least to have two. For a damsel bred in a twelfth century Border castle this would seem a creditable display of caustic humour. So the fortunate bridegroom provided himself with two names, and became Robert Fitz le Roy. But the young woman

had not even then quite finished with him, and, like most people of discretion, believing there to be much in a name, insisted on knowing precisely what that of their eldest son was to be. Being informed that he would most assuredly be Robert, Earl of Gloucester, she intimated that matters might now be proceeded with. Her husband, Earl Robert, proved an entire success, a man both of might and learning, who, among other worthy exploits, put the finishing touches to the abbey. I must not try the reader's patience too greatly with the chronicle of the famous dynasty of Gloucester and Glamorgan, of which the honour of Tewkesbury formed so vital a part; but in two generations another heiress carried everything away with her, and was appropriated by King John before his accession, and afterwards divorced for his better known match, a mean business possibly and just like the man. Still she proved childless, and the meaner proceeding was to keep her as did John, a quasi-widow and the Earldom of Gloucester vacant—since he could not hold it without her—for years, that he might enjoy its revenues. But this was John all over, and whatever stood for public opinion in those days put an end at length to the intolerable scandal, and the lady was married, but only to go childless still and almost simultaneously with her husband to an early grave. Through a collateral source the great house of Clare now succeeded to the Earldom of Gloucester and Lordship of Tewkesbury. For nearly a century they made it a power in the land. "No family", says a great historian, "approached them in power". Most of them, moreover, laid their bones in Tewkesbury beneath magnificent monuments that have, alas, vanished. The last of the Clares fell at Bannockburn in dramatic fashion; for, while hotly

disputing his right by inheritance to lead the vanguard with his Border neighbour de Bohun, Constable of England, who as such claimed the honour, he ended the dispute by galloping alone and recklessly against the foe to instant death. This fate would most assuredly not have been his had he not in his hot haste forgotten his surcoat with its armorial bearings. For the ransom of a Clare would have been a windfall indeed to a Scottish captor.

Once more in these sanguinary days, when rich widows and heiresses were so continually in the market, the honours passed to a girl, though in this case to more than one, Tewkesbury with Gloucester going to Eleanor. This lady married Edward the Second's favourite, Hugh Despenser, who thus became eleventh earl. For nearly a century it remained with the Despensers, and for the abbey church it was the most important period of all, since during it the nave and choir were almost rebuilt. In 1414 the male line again ran out, and through Isobel, a sister of the last earl, the honours went by marriage to Richard Beauchamp, Earl of Warwick, afterwards Regent of France. Both dying, a young son, Henry, remained, with whom the weak King Henry the Sixth was infatuated, creating him in boyhood premier earl and " King of the Isle of Wight and the Channel Islands ", whatever that mystic title may have amounted to. The weight of his honours apparently brought the poor youth to an untimely grave, though he had married Cicely, sister of Warwick the king-maker, to whom, in addition to his other vast possessions, the honours of Gloucester and Tewkesbury fell. At his death, on Barnet field, Isobel his daughter got Tewkesbury in her share, carrying it to her husband, the ill-fated Duke of Clarence, soon after which the estates passed to the Crown.

If some excuse be needed for such a dose of genealogy it may be found in the fact that the dust of many, if not most of these illustrious persons, lies beneath Tewkesbury Abbey. And though much remains to mark their graves with becoming splendour, it is quite certain that the shameless Philistines of the Dissolution period, and the half-plunderers, half-fanatics of the Civil War have destroyed much more. For during the restoration work some thirty years ago, careful search was made beneath the chancel floor and fragments of painted sculpture were discovered, supposed to have belonged to the reredos. Among these were portions of the figures of Earl Robert, son of Henry the First, who married the satirical daughter of Fitzhamon, another of William, Earl of Gloucester, part of a figure of Gilbert de Clare, the Red Earl, and a similar fragment identified as belonging to Thomas Despenser. There was also a portion of the figure of Gilbert, the last de Clare who was killed, as related, at Bannockburn, holding in his hand an inverted torch signifying the extinction of the male line. The vault under the Despenser monument was explored and disclosed the body of Hugh, the third of the Despensers, in a leaden coffin, and near by the perfect skeleton of Lady Despenser, who died a little later in 1350, while the bones of many of the de Clares, including those of the Bannockburn hero, which showed him to have been a six-foot man, were found in their proper places. The most interesting discovery of this kind was the embalmed body of Isabella, daughter of Thomas Despenser, the widow successively of Beauchamp, Earl of Abergavenny, and of another, Earl of Warwick, of date early fifteenth century. The shroud was perfect, one hand and arm protruding through it. The body, too, was apparently complete, and through

an opening in the graveclothes above the face an abundance of auburn hair was plainly visible.

Nearly all the monastic buildings, including the church, were condemned to destruction as "superfluous" at the Dissolution, by the king's commissioners. In other words, His Majesty, besides seizing the ample revenues, proceeded to realize for cash on the building, stone and lead. The townsfolk, on urgent petition, were graciously allowed to put their hands in their pockets and pay what was practically blackmail to the amount of £550, equal to ten times that sum nowadays, for the salvation of their glorious church. This noble building is fortunate, too, in the minor matter of its approach and immediate environment. A screen of tall limes and a large umbrageous and well-ordered graveyard divides its northern front from the wide termination of the quiet street, which last again is dominated by the beautiful half-timbered hostelry of the "Bell Inn", with the old monastic mill spanning the stream in the background. The abbey church is a cruciform building with a total length of about 300 feet. The nave, which extends over the greater half of this and terminates at the west end in two pinnacles, together with the fine, profusely arcaded, Norman tower are at the first glance the most dominant features of the fabric, and in distant views of the abbey are singularly effective. On moving round to the west end, however, you are confronted with what is regarded as the finest west front in England, an immense arch over 60 feet high, recessed with no less than seven circular shafts. The space has been filled at a later date by the immense perpendicular window, some 40 feet in height, which we now see. The aisles of the nave have lean-to roofs and are of Early English

style with pointed windows, while a plain, massive two-storied north porch of the same date forms the main entrance. The transepts are short, while the extension of the east end beyond the tower maintains the elevation of the nave, but with later and more decorative work, and is surrounded by a succession of partly detached chapels in curious and picturesque grouping. The tower, the battlements of which are the only modern additions, had once a wooden spire, which crashed down during service on Easter Day, 1559, a catastrophe which in more or less similar form was of the commonest occurrence in the Middle Ages and Tudor period. One is accustomed to regard the workmanship of these old monks and their masons with unqualified admiration. But, as a matter of fact, towers and steeples toppled about in their day and afterwards like very ninepins. It is difficult to recall a cathedral or church of note that was not at one time or another shattered in part or grievously injured by the unexpected collapse of some conspicuous portion, and it is difficult to reconcile the skill, devotion, care, and time lavished on sacred buildings with these constant structural failures.

The interior of the nave presents a splendid vista of massive cylindrical Norman pillars connected by semicircular arches, carrying a triforium and clerestory with small windows. The roof is groined, the ribs supporting it springing from sculptured heads on the capitals of the pillars, while the bosses at the intersection are carved figures of considerable repute among ecclesiologists. The nave aisles are at a much lower elevation, but have also groined roofs with some good bosses and are lighted by handsome pointed windows. At the east end of either aisle are monuments, dubiously said to commemorate notables who

ABBEY CHURCH, TEWKESBURY

fell in the bloody battle which here terminated the Wars of the Roses and of which I must speak later.

The choir is a blend of styles, owing to a good deal of early alteration. The old Norman pillars have been shortened and support some beautiful arches of the decorated period, while a triforium connected with the clerestory continues all round. The fourteenth century clerestory windows are filled with stained glass depicting saints and benefactors. Restoration has been busy here, and there is much blending of the old and new. Here again is a rich ceiling and more ornamented bosses. The floor of the choir has been laid with tiles, in part, old ones unearthed at the Restoration and filled in with well-executed replicas, mostly heraldic and rightly suggestive of the great houses whose dead lie below. The same plan has been well carried out in preserving the names of those whose remains were identified during the recent investigations. The spot beneath the tower, for instance, where the young Prince Edward of Wales, slain at the battle of 1471, is traditionally held to have been buried, is marked by an inscribed brass. Both north and south transept too, which branch from the tower space, are full of interest. The former is nearly filled by the organ, but abutting on the east is a thirteenth century chapel, which, during the long period of neglect, was used as a school and miscalled the chapter-house. Restoration has here worked wonders, not merely in the literal sense of the term, but by the beautiful and hitherto obscured work it brought to light. Conjecture, in default of better evidence, holds this to have been a lady chapel for the use of the laity. It contains fine clustered pillars of free stone and Purbeck marble, and still shows a good deal of the original arcading that went round the building,

besides much detail, which to catalogue on these pages would be senseless. An ambulatory runs round the choir, out of which open the various chapels, those of St. Margaret, St. Edmund, St. Faith, and the traditional grave of Brihtric, King of the West Saxons; that of the abbot, indicated by his altar tomb, and an adjoining one that serves now, as it did in ancient times, for a clergy vestry. Among other relics in it are some remains of old swords from the field of Tewkesbury, while a room above, reached by a spiral staircase, is known as the monk's chamber. The lady chapel at the extreme east end has vanished, nor must I linger over the tombs and stone coffins of known and supposed abbots or other persons which rest in the ambulatory of the choir.

To the chantry tomb of Fitzhamon I have already alluded. Standing conspicuous on the east side below the altar steps it has a beautiful ceiling of fan-work tracery and much floral decoration. A brass depicting the great Norman was extant not so very long ago bearing the inscription:

> "In ista capella jacet unus, Robertus
> Filius Hamonis hujus loci Fundator."

The adjacent Warwick chantry is yet more elaborate and of the florid style prevalent in the time of Henry the Sixth. The chapel is miscalled, having been actually erected by Isobel Despenser in 1422 to her first husband Richard Beauchamp, Earl of Abergavenny, who fought at Agincourt. An inscription to the lady herself is still partly legible, above the upper band of the screen, and forms one of those links with a remote age that more immediately move the historic rather than the architectural emotions.

On the north side too of the altar is a beautiful canopied monument of the Despensers, representing

Hugh the fifth baron, son of the favourite who was so barbarously executed at Hereford, in company with his wife Elizabeth. The two lie here in alabaster, the fourteenth century armour of the knight and costume of the lady being beautifully carved. In the south transept is an apsidal Norman chapel with a chamber above which belongs to the earlier work of the abbey. Between this transept and the choir stands the much-treasured old organ, which was built in the year 1637 for Magdalene College, Oxford, removed by Cromwell to Hampton Court, where Milton is popularly supposed to have used it, sent back again at the Restoration to Magdalene, and finally purchased by Tewkesbury in 1736. Even now it is occasionally used, but has been subjected at various times to a great deal of renovation. The ancient glass of the choir windows is another of the treasures of Tewkesbury. The Despensers of the fourteenth century are credited both with the stone-work of the pointed windows and their original filling, of which last there are considerable remains. The glass, however, has been much knocked about, and the damage not over well repaired. But even still, and above all, from the historical point of view, these windows are of great value. How indeed could they be otherwise when we have in them more or less contemporary portraits of the Clares, Despensers, and others of the great warriors and nobles with whom the fortunes of the abbey were identified; mainly valuable of course for the elaborate armour and costumes as they are here depicted, and above all for the armorial bearings which so materially help the modern student to an understanding of their complicated relationship. The cloisters have gone, but the old gatehouse of the monastery has escaped demolition. Part of the

present vicarage, hard by the church, and an arched gateway belong to the original fabric. When I have stated that the site of the monastic buildings, with their remains outside the church precincts, were private property till purchased by subscription for £10,000 about twenty-five years ago, I leave the subject, with that vague sense of some apology due to the reader which always haunts me after taking him into a church and then saying what is very likely to be either too much or too little for him. The first, to be sure, is the most heinous offence of the two, for the other can be amended by reference to one of those publications whose worthy and proper function it is to set forth in detail exteriors and interiors. But I know the type of man exactly who will not tolerate such shirking, and have a great regard and respect for him as an enthusiast and a staunch supporter of the county archæological society. I have spent many a pleasant hour in many a church in many counties with him, but he has the vice of the specialist accustomed to dealing with select bodies of enthusiasts, and when he confronts an unassorted audience he is apt to display a somewhat dimmed sense of perspective and lack of consideration for the weak members among them. To be more precise, he would have me take no heed of them—and in consequence, of course, none for myself or my publisher. Now a writer may feel fairly sanguine of retaining both the company and the goodwill of his reader upon a mountain, or upon a country road, but a church interior is a cruel test. I find myself ever looking anxiously over my shoulder, as it were, at every paragraph, lest I should behold no one left but the censorious archæologist making rigid note of my judicious omissions, and urging me forward against my better instincts to the bitter end.

It is one thing to admire a building in person, with or without any technical equipment, but quite another to rejoice greatly in the printed details of arch and column, of vaulting and window tracery, of capital or corbel, in one that you have never seen and may never see ; and can these be made animate in description ? Yet what literary pilgrim would dare to pass by, in his pages, church or abbey of any note with the remark that it was of Norman date and that an excellent guide can be had at the door for sixpence. Personally, on entering the precincts with my reader, I feel almost uncomfortable, treading fearfully, as it were, between the Scylla of the archæologist and the Charybdis of the layman. The former of course could not possibly be really conciliated between the covers of a book that anybody else would read, while on the latter's account I feel much anxiety, when beguiled betimes into testing his patience. There are people of sensibility who feel profoundly the influence of an historic building, but could scarcely tell Perpendicular from Early English work, just as there are some ecclesiologists who are absolutely dead to all sense of the past except as punctuated by architectural styles. The first are infinitely more capable of bettering their point of view or, in other words, of providing themselves with a sort of ground-work from which to stimulate their imaginations, and that too with almost ridiculous ease. I do not think anything is more profitable within limits to the soberer period of life than a grasp of the elements of church architecture, even if the temperament that grafts other things upon it is lacking. The village church, at any rate, is nearly always there, as a worthy objective point in these days of facile movement. Thither the motorist, the cyclist, or the now more rare pedestrian, drifts

almost whether he likes it or not. It has been given me to be a witness perhaps, in a far more than common degree, of the attitude of the modern pilgrim as he wanders round the aisles of our English churches of all kinds, and it is in truth an instructive object lesson. The real pleasure that some obviously therein gather, contrasts quite curiously with the hopeless futility and manifest anxiety to get through with it and away that possesses others, as they moodily peruse an inscribed marble tablet to a recently deceased churchwarden. Dear reader, or at least dear fellow-rambler, if you are still unconverted, and still flinch from the technicalities of ecclesiastical architecture, brace yourself to make the trifling investment of time over its elements. It will pay you enormous interest for an extremely small outlay, awaken curiosity, perchance, on other things associated with it and stand nobly by you in your walks abroad.

A good deal of fighting has been done at Tewkesbury, but that single May Day of 1471, when Edward the Fourth gained his crowning victory over the Lancastrians, easily eclipses in importance and bloodshed all the skirmishes combined that took place here during the last Civil War. The battle of Barnet had been fought in the preceding month, Warwick the kingmaker killed, and the shortlived reinstatement of Henry the Sixth brought to a violent end. Queen Margaret and Prince Edward, hastening from France, had failed, it may be remembered, to make the English coast till the very day of the battle. But the Duke of Somerset and other Lancastrians who had escaped in safety from the Hertfordshire field decided to take advantage of their presence and make one effort to relieve the fortunes of their cause. Margaret, somewhat against her will, was persuaded to the endeavour,

and Exeter appointed as the rendezvous for all those prepared to support her in the enterprise. Only a moderate force, however, was raised in the west, and when King Edward marched to oppose them, the Lancastrian army having reached the Severn valley and met with several disappointments, had decided to head for the north, picking up Jasper Tudor and a Welsh force on the way. But Edward's promptness, added to bad roads and floods, forced Somerset and the queen to stand and fight at Tewkesbury. The battlefield lay in the meadows, through which the main road to Gloucester now runs, about a mile to the south of and a little higher than the town. A small camp of doubtless prehistoric date, and now shaded with elms, on the left of the Gloucester road, marks the spot where the queen and prince had their quarters, on the night of May 3rd, and is still called Queen Margaret's camp. Around them, with their backs to the town and facing the south towards Cheltenham, through which Edward marched, lay their army. Here, too, Shakespeare gives us that picture of the impending battle, in the fifth act of "Henry the Sixth", and of the brave Queen Margaret addressing her troops in rousing lines. The Duke of Somerset and his brother John Beaufort led the van, Prince Edward and Lord Wenlock the centre, while the Earl of Devon had command of the rearguard. With King Edward came Clarence, who had played the Lancastrians false before Barnet, and his own brother Richard, still almost a boy, but a very man in action, while among other leaders came Lord Hastings and Thomas Grey. The Lancastrians seem to have entrenched themselves, and the Yorkists opened battle with their numerous artillery, which was posted on a slightly higher ridge easily recognized now from

Queen Margaret's camp and crossed by the Gloucester road. Jasper Tudor and his Welshmen failed to arrive in time.

The first attack was made by Richard upon Somerset's entrenched force, and failing to break its protected front, he practised the old ruse of feigned flight, which brought the incautious defenders into the open, and, as it proved, to their utter discomfiture. For the greater part of the pursuers were attacked in turn by the pursued and driven in headlong route towards the Severn where, in a field still called the "bloody meadow" and marked by a row of willows, they were slaughtered in prodigious numbers. Somerset himself, with a few followers, escaped to the other division of the army, but instead of lending it aid and encouragement, he fell publicly foul of Lord Wenlock, its commander, for not supporting him, with great fury and ultimately clave his skull. This deplorable outburst was not calculated to put heart into the troops, who were at the same moment attacked with great resolution by Edward himself, and, to shorten the story, the entire Lancastrian army was after a brief and partial resistance put to utter rout. Most of them made for the town, and both in its outskirts and streets a further sanguinary carnage took place. Somerset himself, with many other men of rank, fled to the abbey, where even there they would not have escaped the immediate vengeance of the pursuing king but for the clergy, who threw themselves into the breach with all that spiritual artillery which the ancient Church had at its command. A priest bearing the host met the pursuers at the entrance and extracted from the king a solemn promise of pardon for all who sought refuge within the sacred building. The chroniclers disagree as to the death of the so-

called Prince Edward of Wales, some affirming that he was killed in fair fight, others that he was brutally murdered in cold blood afterwards in Tewkesbury.

Holinshed relates that proclamation was made to the effect that whosoever should bring forth the prince dead or alive should have an annuity of £100 for life, and that the lad himself, if living, should be spared. Sir Richard Crofts, who was in some sort the boy's guardian, thereupon produced him, " a fair and well-proportioned young gentleman whom, when King Edward had well advised, he asked him how he durst so presumptuously enter his realm with banner displayed, whereupon the prince boldly answered, saying, ' To recover my father's kingdom and heritage from his grandfather to him, and from him after him to me lineally descended ', at which words King Edward said nothing, but with his hand thrust him from him, or (as some say) stroke him with his gauntlet, whom directly George, Duke of Clarence, Richard, Duke of Gloucester, Thomas Grey, and William, Lord Hastings, that stood by, cruelly murdered, for the which cruel act the more part of the doers in their latter days drank the like cup by the righteous justice and due punishment of God. His body was homely interred in the church of the monastery of the black monks of Tewkesbury ".

After the battle a great service of thanksgiving was held in the church. The next day was a Sunday, and for some reason, whether or no induced by the day, thoughts of vengeance seem to have been in abeyance. But on Monday the lust of blood broke out afresh, the town was ransacked for refugees and a goodly crowd of them brought before the Duke of Gloucester as Constable of England, and Mowbray, Duke of Norfolk, as Earl Marshal. A few were pardoned, but

a long list sentenced to death, including Somerset, and two of the Courtneys. A scaffold was erected, and on Tuesday the heads of the victims were struck off, after which Edward marched to Worcester.

Queen Margaret had so far evaded capture, and for some three days she lay in hiding in "a poor religious place", which may only be guessed at. No royal woman surely ever had so much experience as Margaret of Anjou in this kind of thing, as witness her frequent adventures alone and with her husband in Northumberland. She was eventually caught, however, and held as a prisoner till her father paid the large ransom demanded, and she retired to the Continent to end in no long time her stormy life.

Tewkesbury possessed, in the person of the late Mr. Thomas Collins, a perhaps unexampled combination of a builder by trade who was also an architect and antiquary of enthusiasm, taste, and learning. The abbey in all matters of recent restoration owes a great deal to this gentleman, and the town almost as much. A pride in the preservation of its many beautiful old houses was greatly fostered by him, and much of the work done under the same felicitous auspices. His own late residence facing the Cross, where the three streets of the town meet, is perhaps the finest of all these half-timbered houses. Tradition has it that this was in ancient times the court-house of the town where the feudal lords of Tewkesbury abode when in residence, and that from its windows Edward the Fourth enjoyed the spectacle of the executions that followed on the battle. To catalogue these old houses here would be superfluous, particularly as they demand no quest, for almost all front conspicuously upon the main streets. None are more imposing than the two old hostelries, the "Bell" and the "Black Bear", already

HIGH STREET, TEWKESBURY

alluded to, which stand at the opposite entries to the town from Gloucester and Worcester respectively, while the "Wheatsheaf Inn" in the High Street, and an old, lofty, narrow-gabled house, with its projecting fourth story next to the "Swan Hotel", are as striking as any. But in addition to the many conspicuous old and partially restored timbered dwellings, which make Tewkesbury a delight to the passing visitor, a great deal of old interior, as in other such places, lurks behind what are more or less modern fronts. But the fact that a bowling-green with all those mellow attributes of exquisite turf and embowering foliage, that give many such places a flavour of their own, and in this case embellished further with some topiary work, exists behind the "Bell Hotel", reminds me that Tewkesbury is also the scene of a Victorian novel of repute. I blush to say that I could never grapple joyfully with "John Halifax, Gentleman", and again failed, to my shame, no doubt, even under the shadow of the fictitious hero's inspiring presence to get much forward with it. That, however, is no doubt my loss, and it only matters here that Tewkesbury sets forth "John Halifax" as one of its assets in the literature with which it courts the visitor and seeks to stimulate the stranger already within its gates. The connexion is in a sense fortuitous; the authoress had, I think, no immediate association with the town and was, I believe, very little there. A mural monument, however, in the abbey to Mrs. Craik, placed there by her admirers, confers upon that lady an enduring citizenship, and the verger tells me it interests visitors much more than the tomb of Fitzhamon, which is quite characteristic of the average tourist. One cannot refrain, since it is all in the same neighbourhood, comparing the local atmosphere of "John Halifax"

and those of another gifted authoress of the same period with the scene of so many of her books. The middle-class town life depicted by Mrs. Henry Wood in her Worcester books one feels to be without intention a really valuable if ingenuous picture of a cathedral town atmosphere, though illustrated mainly through the medium of babes and sucklings, merely because the authoress was part of it, and vastly different, of course, from Trollope's brilliant handling of Salisbury. I admit without a blush that in years quite mature I had no difficulty whatever in getting through the "Channings" and "Mrs. Haliburton's Troubles", and what is more, I never find myself even to-day in Worcester streets without a sympathetic thought for that cruelly harassed lady, though most of the harrowing details are long forgotten. Nor ever pass the boys of the cathedral school, flocking out through the Edgar tower, without a thought for that amiable scapegrace Roland York, or the quite immaculate Arthur Channing. I do not know whether there is a memorial to Mrs. Henry Wood in Worcester Cathedral, but if there is not there ought to be.

I have spoken of the old abbey mill on that diverted channel of the Avon which washes the back of the town, and from whose banks the latter gives such a picturesque display of irregular gables and well-mellowed red walls. Like an ancient timepiece with new works in its case the abbey mill and even its old wheel still holds with the past, but its interior has had to conform to the pressure of modern needs, and help to maintain the reputation of Tewkesbury for its one remaining industry of milling. Now when the floods are out, a vast sheet of water spreads from this town edge over the Ham, that wide expanse of meadow land which fills the angle of Severn and

Avon. One January, some four years ago, this state of things was in progress, and the river which rushes from the dam underneath the mill through a brick tunnel into a surging pool below had risen up through the flooring and covered it with about a foot of water. It was in this situation that my friend the miller became himself the inadvertent hero of a performance, the like of which, considering the circumstances, outstrips anything of the kind that I have ever come across in real life or readable fiction. We stood over what is now a grating in the office floor, but was then an unprotected aperture some three feet square when he first told me the story, which was as follows :—

It was on a dark night, and as I have said, in January, and everything was under water but the handbridge connecting the mill with the end of the lane, including the floor of the mill and this adjoining office room. Beneath the latter the water filled, of course, the whole void, not running fast as usual, but pressed up by surrounding floods into a state of stagnation. On this occasion the cover for some reason was drawn back from the trap-door ! It was about seven o'clock, the men had gone home, and my friend, having stayed for an hour or so, was just about to lock up and depart when he remembered something left behind in the office. Knowing the room so intimately, he left his lamp behind him and waded knee-deep or thereabouts on his errand, either forgetting the trap was open, or being over-confident as to his bearings in the dark. Down he went, at any rate, clean through it into the black and watery abyss below. The miller, as a miller should be when on in middle age, is of generous proportions, and as we stood in the bright daylight on the dry floor beside the comparatively small aperture, it seemed incredible that he could

have popped so neatly through without saving himself by his elbows or hands, but the depth of water over the floor no doubt, in the suddenness of the drop, threw them up as he went down. Any way, down he went into as hopeless a situation as black nightmare ever conceived. As a young man he had possessed just the ordinary capacity for swimming. But the plunge was one such as in thick water no professor of the art would have taken upon any consideration upon a summer noon. The flood, as I said, was up to and above the floor, and there was not a particle of current under these conditions to wash a swimmer down to the only aperture into the millpool some 20 feet away. By a miracle of good luck, helped, as he thinks, by a recollection of how he was facing as he went down, he struck out under water in the right direction, and finally emerged into the millpool below the tunnel, there rising of course to the surface in a properly breathless condition in the blackness of the night. The millpool was now of course but part of a waste of waters, and my friend in all his heavy winter garments. A high brick embankment, however, runs out from the mill, and that a part of this was above water the struggling miller was aware. A portly, buoyant sort of man of strong nerve, even if he has not been in the water for a quarter of a century, has perhaps some advantage over a lean and neurotic person of greater activity under such abnormal conditions. Any way, my friend hit off the parapet which, being only just above the surface, was readily accessible. Once there he was safe, and for the moment the humour of the thing struck him much more forcibly than the horror of it, and his heart being sound, and his bones well covered, and his nerves strong, his first impulse was to laugh loudly. His wife has described to me

OLD BRIDGE, TEWKESBURY

more than once his arrival at home, and I do not fancy she laughed when she took in the situation, cheerful soul though she is. Probably even in the stout-nerved hero of this prodigious exploit there were moments of reaction. For myself, knowing the geography of that gruesome Stygian route that mine host had followed so recently, in comfortable, warm-clad, portly middle age on a winter's eve, I admit that I never woke in the night to hear the gentle summer murmurings of the Avon babbling from the mill for a long time, but I thought of it, and in thinking shuddered.

But the most effective bit of the Avon, in its association with Tewkesbury, beyond doubt is the old brick bridge beneath which it enters the town, before parting its streams: the one to receive boats and barges from the Severn, the other to turn its two mills, for besides that of the abbey there is a large modern one with no claim whatever to the picturesque. Here above the old red bridge are boat-houses with pleasant suggestive surroundings, while below it the old hostelry of the "Bear and Ragged Staff" of Warwick, though the second appanage has dropped out, displays itself in harmonious company. From here in the summer months you may embark on most days upon a small steamer for Worcester, or Bewdley, or Gloucester, or other Severn towns and plough the sombre, little-travelled waters of that majestic river, or travel up the Avon slowly through locks and more immediately attractive surroundings to Pershore and Evesham. Here the Cheltenham College boys, delivered by special trains, may be seen embarking in their outrigged fours and eights for practice on the Severn, and all sorts of holiday people being launched in craft of a more domestic pattern for gentler pilgrimage

on the narrower but more engaging waters of the Avon.

Scarcely anybody indeed goes boating on the Severn except in racing fours and eights, for which its broad, deep, and leisurely current offers a course that Oxford or Cambridge might well envy. For Sabrina is a strange river. After its arrival in Worcestershire, in the neighbourhood of Bewdley, it may be said, speaking broadly, to lose that flavour of a salmon river which it maintains tolerably well throughout Shropshire, and to cease finally from troubling. Henceforward, with the assistance of a weir or two at long intervals, the river rolls along a deep and voiceless flood. The waters of a hundred Welsh mountain streams are at length bridled and hushed into a wide brownish-hued silent flood that only utters a gurgle here and there at the base of its high banks where some tortured willow trunk bends its knees into the stream. The Severn is like no other of the greater English rivers, with which as the greatest of all one can alone compare it. I know it from source to mouth, but it is rather on achieving full maturity, say at Arley, thirty-five miles above Tewkesbury, that it begins to develop its peculiar character.

Throughout its entire course it has much more than common beauty of environment, but from Plinlimmon to Gloucester it always just fails to touch the high watermark of West British scenery. With equal advantages of birth, as one may fairly say, and greater length of journey, it never achieves the high distinction, the exquisite beauty which marks the best of the Dee, the Wye, or the Usk. But it is in the last forty miles or so above Tewkesbury that it takes on that peculiar sombre flavour which is all its own. From a bordering hilltop or even from the high arch

of a bridge, the Severn presents many a beautiful vista that leaps to the mind. As a winding trail in the meadows amid the rich fair Worcestershire scenery, and between hills draped in woodland or bright in spring with the blossom of orchards, it is always fair and often beautiful. But the big stream itself undoubtedly lacks endearing qualities. It seems to invite no familiarity and display no charm of detail. The snug village, the ancient church tower, the Tudor mansion, the timbered park which abound along its course are with rare exceptions thrust back to the foot or the brow of the receding hills, while the river pursues with even current its solitary way between high, rather monotonous banks, and amid far-spreading meadows given over to the bullock and the June haymaker. Here and there, where a bridge spans the river, some well-known house of entertainment caters for the day-tripper, and pleasure boats ply over a limited distance. But these sociable interludes are far apart. In the normal reaches of the Severn, often among quite beautiful scenery and on a perfect stream *qua* stream for such purposes, there is scarcely a sign that either local or stranger ever dips an oar or paddle in its waters. The sort of thing you see everywhere on the Thames, or even on the Wye, a troublesome river for the pleasure boat, is here practically unknown. Once or twice a day a small steamer dragging a long trail of barges makes a prodigious commotion on the placid almost gloomy stream, and dashes the waters against the base of the high red crumbling banks. Once or twice a day, too, a steamer load of tourists, making the long, slow journey from Tewkesbury to Worcester or beyond, repeats the same commotion. And between whiles the moor-hen and the water-rat have the strange, unsociable river to themselves,

sharing it betimes with some solitary angler who plants himself on a lower ledge of the rough flood-torn bank, and watches his float swimming slowly past him till the moment arrives for the oft-repeated process of pitching it once again upstream.

As a matter of fact, it is these high banks, rising always fifteen or twenty feet above the water in normal times, that give the Severn much of its moody character amid otherwise fair and gracious scenes. Indeed, from the surface of the stream you could see uncommonly little for much of the way, but the passing banks, fringed sometimes with stunted and much-fretted willows, a prospect that may not deter a strenuous undergraduate four from pulling down from Bewdley to Gloucester, but is an effectual discouragement to the oarsman who boats with his wife and family, or his young woman, or only a book and a pipe. The very salmon which, of course, run up the Severn as they run up the Wye and Usk, seem affected by its character. There are a hundred tumbling pools in Shropshire where, by all ordinary rules, they should rise to the fly, and all through Montgomeryshire the Severn is a clean and buoyant salmon river in every apparent essential, but they entirely reject all feathered lures, and why this perverse behaviour is one of those mysteries with which the king of fishes likes to bewilder successive generations of ichthyologists to the end of time. What you can see, however, from the banks of Severn and, indeed, of Avon also, and that too with unfailing delight, both at Tewkesbury and at almost any point up the valley towards Worcester, are the ever dominant Malvern Hills. Most of us who have any sense of such things at all have a pretty true instinct when the British hill becomes a mountain. There is, of course, no precise

line of division, though probably the neighbourhood of 2000 feet roughly marks the altitude which in our British atmosphere and environment first touches one with that indefinable uplifting sense, mingled with a certain pleasurable awe, only awakened by positive and palpable stature. At a point just below 2000 feet, hills have always seemed to me to pass the line of mystery, to soar out of contact with the world below, to touch an upper one that abides, not merely in utter loneliness, but on intimate terms with clouds and storms that we below only know fitfully when they drive us before them into the vale beneath. But 2000 feet, though it satisfies one in a cognate sense, does not by any means of necessity make a mountain, and though unequalled as is our island climate in casting a glamour over hill and mountain, and giving all the dignity to 3000 feet of thrice that stature and more garish climes, you must have boldness and symmetry at the 2000 feet standard to suggest the mountain. It never occurs to one, for instance, to call Dartmoor, the Stretton Hills, Radnor Forest, or the West Yorkshire moors, mountains, though they all of them touch those cognate chords, dimly indicated above, in a manner that the Cotswolds, just above us here, or the Wiltshire or Sussex downs could not effect. On the other hand one would never think of calling the only slightly higher range of the Brecon Beacons anything else but mountains, while in North Wales and the Lake districts plenty of heights of but little over 2000 feet have every quality of a mountain and are never alluded to as anything else.

The Malvern Hills do not nearly touch this border limit, at which the English hill and mountain vaguely meet, for the Worcestershire Beacon is under 1500 feet, an altitude that nothing, perhaps, can quite make a

mountain of. But of all the ranges in England proper, south, at any rate, of the Peak district, this chain of little peaks is by far the most imposing, as a landmark and a spectacle. The fact that it springs as a narrow spine out of a comparatively level country is in its favour, and this, added to its bold, cone-shaped summits, conveys the impression, more or less marked, according to the atmosphere, of a true range of mountains, almost as if some fragment of North Wales had wandered incontinently on to the verge of the Midlands: while geologists add to the interest by telling us they are among the oldest rocks in the world. The Malvern Hills dominate the valley of the Severn from Worcester to Tewkesbury and add immense distinction to the scenery. The Avon valley, too, through all its lower reaches, from many points shares the privilege of witnessing the sunset behind these stately hills, and nearly the whole of Worcestershire lies subject to their influence. Wander where you will among the gentle and uneventful midland foregrounds of Hither-Severn, Worcestershire, this exotic-looking fragment of some other region, this inimitable make-believe of a mountain range springs as an ever-recurring surprise and at ever-shifting angles in the west.

It is of no consequence whatever that these sublime qualities do and must greatly evaporate as you draw close to the foot of the hills themselves and put yourself on intimate terms with their grassy slopes, steep as they are, and their by no means rugged crests. They are everything, of course, that one expects of so lofty and sudden an outcrop, while the view from the summit is perhaps the finest and most significant in all England. An outlook that easily takes in the Warwickshire heart of England and the mountainous heart of wild Wales, that touches the fringe of

Merioneth and Carmarthen, and discloses Exmoor with all the interludes that these limits will suggest to the man of reasonable knowledge of his own country, does not invite comparison with the many "finest views in England" within the fifty miles radius of London. It is at a distance, however, that the Malverns produce that effect which makes them unique among purely English hills, an effect immensely assisted by their curious misplacement, if the term is permissible. Twenty miles to the westward, and twenty miles is a long way in this little island, the most opulent country in the world for physical and climatic contrasts, they would fall into place, as it were, and be overshadowed and lose half their distinction, whereas they now illuminate a region that seems to produce them by a supernatural and wholly unexpected effort, and they make the most of their situation.

CHAPTER II

UP-STREAM TO BREDON

THERE was fighting enough and to spare in and about Tewkesbury during the Civil War. For though never seriously garrisoned nor fortified, it was an important post, being taken and retaken no less than ten times in the course of the struggle. Indeed we are here in a country, and shall remain in it till nearly the end of this volume, that may fairly be called the cockpit of the war, and with good reason, for Worcestershire and its outskirts was of vital import to the king. It was the centre of a region sufficiently strong in Royalist sympathies to enable the king's soldiers to hold most of the towns for much of the time. Above all, it lay between Oxford and Wales, the land of Charles's reinforcements and supplies, and still more the land of his hopes. It lay also on the road between Oxford and Ireland, assistance from which last distracted country we all know was a chronic expectation. So attacks on the garrisons of the Severn valley were constant: the more so since Gloucester, being early captured by the Parliamentarians, was held for the rest of the war by Massey, one of their most active generals.

With Gloucester a dozen miles down the Severn, and Worcester a little more than a dozen miles up it, and a constant centre of Royalist activity and object of Parliamentary attention, Tewkesbury and the

lower Avon country had little rest. Essex, with an overpowering army, had got into Worcestershire at the very beginning of the war, while the Royalists were gathering their strength at Shrewsbury, and to the westward of it for that great forward movement which cleared this region and resulted in the drawn battle of Edgehill, the first great engagement of the conflict. At Worcester was fought, however, the first serious skirmish of the war, which had an effect far beyond its actual proportions. At Worcester the last royal garrison, after a protracted siege, capitulated, and finally was fought at Worcester a few years later in 1651 that sanguinary engagement in which Charles, not yet " the Second ", made his spirited bid for his father's crown. That skirmish alluded to above took place at Powick Bridge on the Teme, near its junction with the Severn on the Tewkesbury side of Worcester, and was the first taste of Rupert's qualities, and those of the then fresh and well-mounted cavalier nobles and gentry, given to the untutored raw troopers of the Parliament's earliest levies. The overwhelming personal superiority of these high-couraged trained horsemen and swordsmen to the hapless troopers of Essex, with the death and terror they dealt out, inspired dismay, says Clarendon, among the active supporters of the Parliament. The accounts of their punishment, spread by the fugitives from Powick field, who never stopped riding till they got to the Avon, and some of them till they reached their own homes, created the worst effect through the army, and yet more in the busy recruiting districts. The invincible nature of Rupert's cavalry became noised about London, and the recruiting serjeants found their difficulties doubled. Many a man, too, says Clarendon, intimidated by these reports, left the

army never to be seen again. Powick, however, whose twice blood-stained bridge, for it played a great part in the last battle of Worcester, still survives, is hardly within the Tewkesbury district, but Upton-on-Severn lies quite handy to it on the north. It is scarcely in itself worth a visit, but to the curious in Civil War history or to any who have a fancy for spots where heroic deeds were done, the stagnant, old-world, decadent little town, whose east end just peeps over the high bank of Severn, should surely give them pause. Such an effort will be the easier as the little steamer that runs on most summer days to Worcester makes its first stop at Upton, where a later bridge spans the Severn in the place of the one that was the leading scene in the incident.

For it was on the day before the last and final battle of Worcester, and, as Cromwell's army, under its great chief in person, was advancing on the city, that Fleetwood, commanding the left wing, was ordered to throw an advance party across the Severn and seize Upton, which was held by an outpost from Worcester of three hundred Scots under the brave and able turncoat, Massey. The bridge at Upton had been partially destroyed by the Royalists, but a single plank had been inadvertently left across the gap or gaps between the piers, poised high above the deep and sullen river. Fleetwood had with him, however, some of the best troops of Cromwell's now matchless Ironsides. The morning was still dim, and Massey's men, who held the little town, might not be over-watchful, as they had removed all the boats, and knew nothing of course of the forgotten planks. Fleetwood now ordered forward eighteen picked musketeers to make the perilous journey over the narrow foothold. On reaching the farther bank this small company were to

seize the churchyard and church, and hold them against the Scots till the general could get a further body of men over the river to their support. Even these veterans demurred at the giddy prospect, combined with the additional one of being shot at in transit. It was the tight-rope part of the enterprise, however, not the desperate venture on the other side, that checked these brave, leather-coated, steel-capped, booted men, and this they ultimately solved by straddling across one after the other. Reaching the bank without alarming the enemy, they just managed to reach the church before the whole garrison was upon them. A tremendous and protracted struggle now ensued, and that too amid the flames of the burning church, which the Scots had managed to set on fire. But the eighteen "Saints of the Lord" repelled every effort to dislodge them till a regiment of Fleetwood's dragoons swam the river, seized the bridge end, and replaced the planks which the Scots had, naturally, withdrawn. Now, of course, there was force enough to drive the enemy out of the town, with considerable loss, and the further wounding of Massey, who was captured next day after the Worcester fight, and sent to the Tower, from which he escaped abroad.

Temperaments differ, and some visitors to Upton will no doubt be more entertained by the reflection that the "White Lion", the principal inn, is mentioned by Fielding in "Tom Jones". The ecclesiologist at any rate will stand aghast and perplexed not at the modern church, if he gets so far, but the preposterous decaying hybrid that now covers the site of the heroism of Fleetwood's martial saints. For, upon the top of the venerable tower, which, shorn of its original spire, survives from the ancient church, an eighteenth century carpenter was permitted to raise in cold

blood a monstrous wooden cupola of uncanny shape, such as you may see on the top of an over-pretentious, old-fashioned, country court-house in America. Several generations of Uptonians, too, must have regarded this thing seated on the summit of their Norman tower with the eye of tolerance, possibly even of admiration, who knows. There is certainly nothing like it elsewhere in England on such a pedestal. Still more curious in a different way is the big-windowed and be-galleried Georgian fabric united to this outraged tower. But more curious than all, this not undignified example of the odd perverted taste of its day, which, as the life of churches go, should now be in its young prime, has been abandoned to the bats and owls, and to the sole gruesome function of harbouring such dead bodies as are picked out of the Severn till the coroner or their friends or the parish have done with them. I could not gather why so roomy if slightly eccentric a parish church on its historic site in the queer little town should have been thus condemned—though not, I fancy, in a structural sense—in mid-career, and a new one of radiant saffron hue, but otherwise uninspiring and irreproachable, erected out in the country. Some leisurely octogenarians propped up against the bridge, who had perhaps justly earned their leisure and more than the half-crown a week allowed them by the parish, poured out their souls to me on the subject and revealed some unsuspected sentiment. Both of them, it seems, had been christened and both of them married in the old church, and it was obviously a grievance that the prospect of both being buried from it had been rudely shattered. But I gathered that these veterans of industry were the humble spokesmen of quite a faction who resented the abandonment of the church

of their fathers, cupola and all, for the radiant geometrical saffron building in the country. It could not have been the cupola that drove the more fastidious and influential of the parish to this radical measure, which otherwise is conceivable, for it suggests an only too great facility of removal. I felt so strongly on the face of things with the old men, and indeed had wrought myself up to quite heated partisanship with the faction, that by their shrugs and ponderous innuendoes I gathered stood by the old church, that I sought out a leading tradesman, in a condition almost bordering on suppressed indignation. I found him singularly eloquent on the subject, but so non-committal that when he had finished I knew there were factions and that was about all. For myself I would sooner worship even in an early Georgian church, galleries, and all, with those mellow associations which are more eloquent, to be sure, beneath pointed arches, but nevertheless have a flavour after all independent of styles, than in all the barren architectural splendours of yesterday which have justly contributed to the reputation and fortunes of Sir Timothy Roodloft.

The late Archbishop Benson has some entertaining recollections of this now abandoned church in his youth. The vocal music was absolutely a one-man performance, in the person of an autocratic clerk, a shoemaker, who wore a wig and large horn spectacles, a black suit and a white tie. The orchestra—flute, clarionet, violin and 'cello—were in the gallery, and to their strains the clerk sang a strenuous but untuneful solo, not a soul in the church venturing to accept his invitation and sing " to the praise and glory of God " either psalm or hymn. I myself sat as a boy for more than a year of Sundays in an Exmoor church, where a matchless clerk sang a duet with a young son,

while a second one accompanied them on a flute through every service from start to finish to a dumb and awestruck congregation.

My conservative friends on the bridge, however, had other and more practical grievances than those associated with the slighted parish church, to wit, the disappearance of the ancient riverside industry. For as we talked, the end of the bridge swung open, and a small tug, dragging twelve narrow barges neatly covered with tarpaulin, came puffing through and swept along at seven or eight miles an hour towards Gloucester. So far as my acquaintance with this stage of the Severn goes, this convoy two or three times a day represents most of the traffic. The old men, however, were eloquent of times past when water carriage was more important, and every craft had to get itself along as best it could, and was much more intimately associated during its leisurely sociable progress with these riverside towns. But such traffic as they could remember was after all but a trifle to what the Severn must have seen before the days of canals. In Tudor and Stuart times and for long afterwards, when English roads were unthinkable quagmires, half the local output of the Midland and the Welsh border counties came down the Severn to Bristol—timber, coal, iron, and all kinds of manufactured goods. Bewdley, now a singularly curious and picturesquely moribund collection of houses and buildings, that tell of ancient wealth and activity, had a monopoly of cap-making and supplied not only the English but afterwards the Dutch navy with headgear. The "Monmouth cap", one may remark in passing, was not then made at Monmouth, but at Bewdley on Severn. The people then engaged in transport alone were a racy and peculiar folk,

combative, clannish, and numerous. The Severn is now, as any one may see, a sombre and lonely river; it must once have been a cheerful and bristling artery. *Sic transit gloria mundi.*

I must not carry the reader away with me on any of those pleasant byways which intersect that delightful Trans-Severn Arcady which lies about the base and to the southward of the Malvern range. Any one quartered at Tewkesbury would be quite sure to find his way to some of the old churches and timbered manor houses, the wide commons bright with gorse, the lofty hill-tops draped waist-deep in bracken, which distinguish an unfamiliar region to whose shy charms Gloucester, Hereford, and Worcester each contribute an outlying fragment of their pleasant territory.

But Deerhurst, with its Saxon church, is a mere stroll of a couple of miles down the Severn, and scarcely that from the Avon's actual mouth. It is, moreover, a place of occasional pilgrimage of the more serious kind from Stratford-on-Avon since the advent of the motor car. But the way from Tewkesbury lies obviously afoot either by pleasant upland faintly traced footpaths over pastures and by lushwood edges or, as I have hinted, along Severn's equally sequestered banks. Indeed, it is no bad sample, this short walk, of the peculiar atmosphere and qualities of the great western river, now a trifle larger from its late absorption of the more cheerful streams of Avon. It comes back to me on a sunny afternoon in early July with its inscrutable reddish-brown deep-sunk flood amid surroundings that were otherwise altogether gracious and even stately. Our path lay along the edge of ox pastures and ample hayfields, which spread to the rim of the near slopes, where,

just out of reach of the Severn's intermittent rages, civilization perched secure. Down below us, some fifteen or twenty feet, for it was the dry season, and taking its hue from the red sandstone nature of both banks and bed, the sullen river forged quietly but quickly upon its seaward way.

The trail of barges may already, for aught I know, have passed up, and nothing else was likely to ruffle its surface but a ferry-boat at long intervals, where some by-road dips into the water and out of it at the farther side. The brimming banks of Avon are ablaze with wild flowers or hedged by whispering reeds; but here the rage of the floods leaves this tall margin, which is intermittently lashed by them, but a rough melancholy slope of red ridges and tangled turf. In the meadows above there was life and movement, for a soft wind was blowing, and rippling in fitful gusts over great acreages of ripening grass, which bent to its gusty breath as the surface of a lake curls with passing winds. There were other meadows, too, already cut and cheery with haymakers. Deep-sunk water-dykes ran here and there parallel with or at right angles to the river, and immense trees, ash, elm, and even oak, that had waxed mighty in the fat rich earth and ample elbow room, threw sombre shadows over the clear, shallow water-courses, and rustled their thousand leaves far above where the breeze, sweeping up these sunny levels from the open distant tideways, smote their tops.

Deerhurst lies just upon the meadow's fringe, barely above high flood mark; the church, the old priory farm, and the Saxon chapel fronting the Severn with gently swelling upland, over which a shorter cut leads to Tewkesbury, rising behind them. It was a flourishing monastery in Saxon times, and the

pleasant so-called Saxon church was a part of it. This qualifying adjective implies, of course, neither scepticism nor disrespect on my part, but merely to mark, for the reader unversed in such technicalities, the fact of the term being generally applied to buildings with any pre-Norman work still abiding in them. In this case an unusual amount, about half the tower at any rate, is attributed to that period, and also the semicircular arched doorways within and without the body of the church respectively. The building is otherwise nearly all of pointed and later work and rectangular in shape. The lines and proportions of the original church can in part be traced by the experts who have worked at it, but this will not interest the reader. A small circular window, a narrow round-headed doorway at the same elevation, and a double window with the unusual gable-tops, all in the inner wall of the tower, would, however, catch the eye of any one standing in the centre aisle, and these are probably Saxon.

I was just wondering in futile fashion whether they were pre-Norman, for the styles though curious are by no means conclusive, when a motor party of Americans from Stratford broke on my meditations and provided an apt illustration of how misleading is the technically used term of "Saxon" to so many ingenuous souls on both sides of the Atlantic. These particular ecclesiologists were in a hurry, and gave about two minutes to the interior, in spite of their obvious conviction that they stood in a complete specimen of a place of worship erected in or about the time of Alfred the Great. The graceful pointed arches of the nave springing from clustered piers, with elaborately floriated capitals of the fourteenth century, had apparently for them no significance what-

ever. Though appealed to on some small matter, and thus given a graceful opportunity, I had not the heart, or perhaps the courage, to interfere with their whole-hearted acceptation of the guide-book's phraseology. For I could see plainly that they were devoting the two minutes to desperate mental efforts at realizing the atmosphere of the Heptarchy, as illustrated by these Gothic arcades, an effort which must be particularly difficult to any one flung here suddenly out of South Dakota, as the visitors' book proclaimed were these ones. But a kind old gentleman had quite recently driven me over to see a Saxon church in his neighbourhood, and after we had walked round a thirteenth century nave and a perpendicular choir, I ventured to ask his guidance to the Saxon work, which was probably the base of the tower and a segment of the chancel wall. "Saxon work? God bless my soul, what more do you want," and he waved an impatient hand down the interesting little early English arcade of the nave, and up to the perpendicular choir with its ample and ornate east window, and of course there was nothing more to be said. My friend was not an ecclesiologist, but was other things much more useful as well as a local patriot, and proud of his district.

If my Americans had not been in such a hurry, however, they would have seen a true Saxon building, complete and entire, the real point of attraction, after all, at Deerhurst; for the remains of the monastery embedded in the adjoining priory farmhouse are inconsiderable. But the late rector, Mr. Butterworth, who was, nay is, for the present tense is happily here applicable, an ardent archæologist, has laid all the secrets of Deerhurst bare in an interesting little brochure. It was by accident, however, I think, that

he discovered the precise relic which we may now see cleared of all obstruction. Now it came about that a half-timbered house known as the Abbot's Court Farm, a hundred yards from the church, was in 1885 being turned into cottages. The rector was looking on casually at the work one day, when he noticed the great thickness of the walls, and on a portion of them, which was covered on the outside with plaster, he detected the faintest trace of an arch. Mr. Collins of Tewkesbury, already spoken of, it so happened was engaged in his business capacity of builder in this apparently matter-of-fact job. Such a happy combination of talent very quickly discovered that they were on something exceptional, and in due course laid open a perfect little Saxon chapel of nave and chancel, divided by a rude round-headed arch. One's thoughts fly on looking at it to the much larger and more famous chapel at Bradford in Wiltshire, discovered quite as fortuitously and in this case also by the rector. The Bradford chapel has, of course, been the keystone of much learned discourse on Saxon ecclesiastical architecture. Since the best authorities, Freeman included, attributed it to the eighth century, the verdict has been reconsidered, and accepted opinion has quite recently moved it to the end of the tenth, and in so doing, so far from bringing it under the Norman influence, which would be dull, has, on the contrary, discovered a more elaborated and independent Saxon school derived from Germanic sources, and found actual comfort, rather than disappointment, for once in a way in a later date. But this tiny chapel at Deerhurst is, in truth, a gem of its kind, if such rude simplicity may be thus defined. It has one feature, at any rate, which Bradford, the best example of Saxon work in

England, is without, and that is an inscription telling us who built it, and leaving no doubt at all as to its date. Mr. Butterworth found on a chimney-stack adjoining the chapel some Latin lettering which he deciphered and translates: "This altar was dedicated in honour of the Holy Trinity". As a complement to this was dug up close by in 1675, when the existence of the chapel was, of course, unknown, and now preserved at Oxford, another stone which in English reads: "Earl Odda had this royal hall built and dedicated in honour of the Holy Trinity for the good of the soul of his brother Eldric which in this place quitted the body; Bishop Ealdred dedicated it on the 12th of April in the fourteenth year of the reign of Edward, King of England". This fixes the date of the chapel, which, by the way, is 45 feet in length. It contains nave and chancel, the latter entered by a narrow aperture with one of those round-headed arches, carried a fraction over the semicircle, and verging on horseshoe shape.

The Avon lends itself to the milder forms of boating more admirably than almost any small river known to me. The greater part of the water for the forty miles of its journey between Stratford and Tewkesbury is excellent for such a purpose. The inevitable lock, of course, has to be encountered, and towards Stratford there are some natural difficulties that though not perhaps insurmountable would deter any who was out to enjoy himself. Indeed, between Tewkesbury and Evesham, some twenty odd miles by water, a small passenger steamer runs nearly every day in summer, causing a prodigious commotion in the little stream. This form of enterprise is stimulated largely from Birmingham, whose junketers, with the railroad facilities now open to them, come in shoals to disport

themselves on the banks of the Severn and upon Shakespeare's classic stream. If I did not know what a strenuous town it was, I should have been led to the conclusion that Birmingham had a holiday every day in the week. That its workaday folk can take so many and in such smart clothes, too, one may, I hope, attribute to their prosperity, and assuredly they are most fortunate in having such ready access to so pleasant a summer land. This kind of thing is, of course, a recent development all over England. In Northumberland or Yorkshire, in Sussex or Warwickshire, alike, a dozen or twenty years ago, the suburbs of the city for normal occasions, and the seaside for special ones, was the regular course of procedure. Now every village is full of the better sort of citizen for several weeks together, while the day-tripper has extended his operations into fields once remote.

Those of us who have special opportunities for noting this change throughout England, and all railway officials, know well that holiday traffic and holiday ways have been absolutely revolutionized. At this we ought surely to rejoice, if the greatest happiness of the greatest number has any meaning. The respectable tradesman and his family bring grist to the country village, in which for a month or so they court the simple life and find new interests and enjoyments in saner things than negro minstrels or music much inferior to that they hear in Birmingham or Bristol. As to the merry tripper he may strike, it is true, an uproariously discordant note amid the rural peace. But then, once dumped by train or steamer upon his particular stamping-ground, he usually stays there or thereabouts till picked up again. He is out to enjoy himself, not for pedestrian enterprises nor to pursue butterflies, nor hunt wild

flowers. There are other sorts of trippers, of course, mild-mannered folk with kodaks and fishing-rods, for the Avon supplies inexhaustible accommodation for the sedentary angler and lessons in patience and hope deferred, unmatched, I should say, from what I have seen, by any stream in England. But this is only at spots here and there. Along the pleasant and picturesque reaches of the river, up which you may row for many miles without a lock from Tewkesbury, there are just enough craft on a fine afternoon to put a finishing touch to a very perfect picture of pastoral peace and tranquil beauty.

Bredon Hill, a great solitary outlier of the Cotswolds, is the dominant factor in the lower vale of Avon; while the road to Evesham, running to the south of the hill, gets there in a dozen miles, the Avon wriggles round the northern side of it and covers nearly as much again in its journey to the same place. Bredon Hill is nearly a thousand feet high and about ten miles in circumference, villages clinging to its skirts, woods and fields climbing nearly to its summit. It practically fills the valley and marks the lower limit of the vale of Evesham. In the ascent of the river from Tewkesbury it looms ahead of you and forms a striking and ever-growing background to the meanderings of the quiet stream. The Avon, as I have said, is a brimming little river and a quite ideal one upon which to glide with leisurely oar. The very antithesis of the inhospitable, sombre-looking Severn, it is the most cheerful and friendly of streams. It puts you on terms at once with its neighbourhood and hides nothing from you that is worth seeing upon its banks. Thick fringes of flag reeds, to be sure, shiver and rustle for short stages upon either hand, but form no unwelcome interlude and make way betimes for

serried ranks of purple willow weed or "coddled apples", as the country folk quaintly call it, and then again the pollard willow comes to the front and grips the bank with binding roots. The chub rises stealthily beneath its shade, while the small dace makes rings all over the surface of the stream. The birds are with us too; not indeed the sand-piper and the water-ousel that haunt the Severn's western tributaries, but the moor-hen makes merry in her raucous fashion in the heart of the flags whence the shy reed warblers pipe at evening, or with luck even a kingfisher may perchance be flushed.

The Avon is an eminently sociable river, nor in any way fearsome in the matter of winter floods, howsoever inconveniently it may spread over the bordering meadows in a rainy season. It is not, like the Severn, at the mercy of remote mountain cataracts that send a three days' rainfall surging down upon an unsuspecting country still suffering from drought. It laves the banks of country villages, the lawns of country rectories, and still turns the wheels of many an ancient grist mill. I committed myself just now, in a moment of inconsiderate levity, to the statement that no potential readers of this little book would be likely to contemplate a month in Tewkesbury. Possibly I have in a measure wiped out the recollection of the *faux pas* and made some amends by giving only a slight indication of how much could be done in such a month by any one reasonably alive to the placid charms and the storied past of rural England. This Avon waterway alone, for those fond of boating amid engaging surroundings, should easily and delightfully fill any vacant days, or, to the taste of some, do much more even than that. For with no sort of pleasure in mechanically pulling a "tub"—using the term in its strict university

sense—I was tempted again and again to these pleasant and homely reaches, and to achieve by water what I also achieved by road, namely, a visit to some of the alluring villages that lie along the banks of the stream.

Twining with its ferry, the first break in the meadows has nothing of particular historical or archæological note. But a church and a rectory, a wood, a hostelry of attractive features, and a time-honoured ferry all combine to make a satisfying picture. But a mile upward, lying snugly above the river bank, with Bredon rising behind, is the village that gave that massive hill its name. The approach thither on the river, brimming here bank-high and forging through the meadows ahead of one, with an exposure that catches and reflects the passing humours of the sky, is singularly felicitous. As both sky and river were of brilliant blue on each fortunate occasion that I made this peaceful pilgrimage, the scene abides with me as among the most inspiring that the Avon has to show.

Perched on a high receding ledge, above the stream, the spire of the old church, shooting far above the tall foliage which gathers around the rectory and manor house, with the river coiling to its feet and the hill of Bredon rising at its back, the approaching visitor will doubtless hold that the spot seems made to be the consummation of a not too arduous water pilgrimage on a summer's afternoon. And when he has tied his boat to the branch of a willow, climbed the green pasture, and pursued the short, leafy, deep-sunk lane to the high terrace upon which the village is perched, there is ample material for the expenditure of a pleasant hour, besides the subsequent and inevitable tea at the village inn. The rectory, with its grounds dipping towards the river, may be incidentally noticed as one of the largest in England, though not in outward

TWINING FERRY, WITH BREDON

appearance nearly so attractive as that statelier one of Fladbury, in a similar situation higher up the stream. Its emoluments in former days made it one of those plums of the church whose figures read like a fairy tale in these degenerate times, when the stipend of the best-nurtured and educated clergy in the world is on all-fours with that of a superior butler. From times previous to the Norman Conquest Bredon was an appanage of the bishopric of Worcester, whose occupant had a park and residence here which last stood by repute on the site of the present rectory. The church and village lie just behind in addition to an ancient tithe barn of fourteenth century date, of vast proportions and in excellent condition. The church alone would fully justify the expedition from Tewkesbury, if such pleasant toil needed justification. The fact of there having been a monastery here in Saxon times, and in later ones its close association with the bishops of Worcester, lend a further interest to the more obvious ones of the fabric itself. This includes an embattled tower carrying a lofty and graceful spire, a vaulted Norman porch with a parvise above, and a Norman nave with decorated aisle and chancel. There is also an interesting Early English chapel, containing several fine monuments. Upon one fashioned in black marble cased with alabaster and profusely decorated with coloured devices, beneath a richly ornamented canopy, lie the recumbent effigies of Giles Reade and his lady, the feet of the former resting upon an eagle with expanded wings. Their children kneel dutifully around them, while a helmet hangs above. On the chancel steps are some heraldic tiles given to the church by the Mortimers in the time of the third Edward. Of most human interest, perhaps, is a black marble slab in the chancel to poor Bishop Prideaux, who was

deposed from the See of Worcester by the Puritans, and retired here to eke out the remainder of his existence on the princely income of 4s. 6d. a week. His misfortunes did not deprive this good prelate of a sense of humour which had possibly not served his turn too well with the Cromwellian party when knocks were more common than jests. For, one day, when hard put to it for a meal, he was walking down the village street to sell some old iron, and on being asked how he did by a passing acquaintance, replied, "Never better in my life, only I have too great a stomach, for I have eaten the little plate the sequestrators left me. I have eaten a great library of excellent books. I have eaten a great deal of linen, much of my brass, some of my pewter, and now I am become an ostrich and forced to eat my iron, and what will come next I know not". That there were people even in Bredon who objected to a state of things that drove out bishops and put sectarians into parish pulpits, and had the courage of their opinions, is well illustrated in the person of one Thomas Gosling, yeoman. This hardy individual put his views upon the induction of "a pious and godly minister and preacher of the Word of God" into verse, and was presented by the jury for shouting and singing his compositions "in the presence and hearing of diverse honest people of the Commonwealth of England":

> Here comes Mr. Beeston,
> The man wee nere Wiston,
> As high as the pulpitt top,
> And to his disgrace
> With his impudent face
> To reap another man's crop.

This was in 1656. Ten years later the shield was reversed and we read of Richard Hunt of the same parish being indicted for giving utterance during his

devotions to such unorthodox invocations as : " Doune with this King of Babylon, this Popery and the idolatrous ways as is now sett upp and that they may not touch the anointed ".

These same Reades, who are commemorated in effigy within the church, were lords here of old, and in the early seventeenth century erected an almshouse in the village, which is the most ornamental of a good many picturesque old buildings of a humble sort. But we are here in a land where almost every village abounds in such ; a country where the " black and white " or half-timbered style is more persistent than in perhaps any part of the west midland and Border region associated with it, and yet more are confronted at close quarters with the Cotswold stone and style. It is no slight merit for a single valley to exhibit in great profusion these two widely differing types of English rural architecture, types that may fairly be said to have no rivals but one another. And I use the term valley here, in the wider sense, for this whole compact region between the high bank of the Cotswolds and the rolling plateau of Worcestershire. The Avon, one might fancy, should flow by rights through the centre of this depression from Evesham to Tewkesbury, whereas we have seen that it wriggles along its north-westerly edge behind Bredon Hill to Pershore, adding no doubt by so doing a good deal to its charm.

A couple of miles or so up the river and upon the farther side, in a situation of quite remarkable seclusion from the madding crowd, is Strensham, or more properly speaking Lower Strensham, now, however, as lying behind a high-wooded bank, very obvious from the Avon. This Lower Strensham consists of a rather remarkable church, a vicarage, and a mill. For myself it comes back to me a great deal more vividly

from the landward point of view, very much the best method of approaching it for any one who has contracted a prior interest in the place, since its associations, like its parish, spread themselves over a considerable extent of country. I had acquired what may be called a conventional interest in Strensham church as enjoying the reputation of being worth inspection and of commemorating Butler the author of "Hudibras". But a more personal interest urged my steps hither, in that it had been of old the seat of the great Worcestershire house of Russell now long extinct. The part they played in the Civil War on the king's side had aroused within me a strong desire merely to behold the fields that bred them, and the site, at any rate, for there is nothing more, of the walls that sheltered them for centuries, and to see, moreover, the splendid monuments and brasses which in this small out-of-the-way parish are the sole relics of this once illustrious race. So one afternoon, in a month of brilliant July days, I took the Worcester road from Tewkesbury, which follows the ridge above the Severn valley, and mounted in due course the slope leading up to it, where stands a modern country house called the Mythe, the site of which seems to have generated a wealth of legendary speculation worthy of the quite fortuitous name. A little later I passed beneath the noble avenue that bisects Brackeridge, one of those numerous upland commons in which Worcester abounds. I had taken of design a somewhat circuitous route and found myself in the neighbourhood of Upton before any opportunity was given for turning west toward the Avon valley, which for a long way runs at quite an acute angle with the Severn. It so happened I had forgotten my map, not a serious oversight for a seven or eight mile road journey. But when at last I turned from the

highway, under the combined influence of an inconsequent looking finger-post and a rustic who characteristically could not get over the discovery that I had deliberately adopted this roundabout route to Strensham, and became in consequence both curt and incoherent, I found myself in a meandering lane which seemed interminable. In course of time, encountering no more humanity, I was greeted by the sight of an extremely disappointing little church of a painfully youthful exterior seated on the top of a bare hill above the road. Still, one has constantly encountered churches that have suffered much externally from the restorer and yet retain within all the flavour and many of the treasures of their past. At any rate the monuments and the brasses of the Russells, I felt confident, were there safe enough. Now the most seasoned rambler is accustomed, and with justice, to assume that when a by-road is marked by a post with only one finger, and that bearing only one name, the first place encountered is the one thus indicated. A modest vicarage lay at the foot of the hill, at the gate of which I came upon the gardener, who duly informed me that the church was locked, but that the key was in the house and very much at my service. I noticed something in his manner not quite in keeping with that of the clerical retainer who is concerned with the keys of churches which strangers frequent, and wondered afterwards what he made of me. He brought out the keys, however, with the significant remark that the vicar was in the house, which I, with a tolerably protracted experience of such interviews, merely interpreted as a hint that, like many intelligent parsons, he was not averse to doing the honours of his church. I have little doubt now, however, that the faithful retainer must have had

some vague suspicions at my untoward demand, undoubtedly the first in his experience. The suggestion suited my inclination exactly. But before reaching the door I practically ran into the arms of the vicar, writing his sermon, I presume, for it was Saturday, at the open window. He was polite but quite excusably a trifle curt, and exhibited no sort of eagerness to play the cicerone, merely remarking that William had the keys. On receiving these from the more curious domestic, the possibility of having been fooled, and not for the first time by a finger-post, flashed upon me and prompted the belated query, "I suppose this *is* Strensham?" "Strensham? Lord, no, sir; this is——" Well, never mind. I looked it up later in a Worcestershire guide-book, whose author, an ardent antiquary, expends a great deal of well-informed eloquence on churches. He dismisses this one in three words as a "very simple structure," which it most undoubtedly looked.

William, however, put me right in my bearings, and naturally disclaimed any responsibility for the sign-post, which probably never led or misled anybody before, since doubtless only natives turn down that way, hence its unworthy survival. The topographical situation of Strensham, however, as represented by its church, was beyond the powers of William; but encouraged by wagoners hauling loads of sweet, well-cured hay to some neighbouring homestead, I ultimately found myself pursuing a road that wandered through many fields and still more gates, yet proved nevertheless to be the route taken every Sunday by the churchgoers of Strensham village, another thing altogether. On subsequently consulting the map I found consolation in the fact that it too had apparently abandoned all hope and recognition of

Strensham church and its wayward approaches. Lower Strensham Castle, however, some distance away was conspicuously marked, though nothing but the moat remains of the fortress which John Russell got a licence to crenellate in the time of Richard the Second.

The wandering track at length ran out in a pasture field where Strensham church rose before me in all its simplicity and seclusion. The vicarage was hidden just below it on a wooded slope which dipped, one might guess, to the Avon, and the vicar kindly placed himself as well as the key at my disposal. There was nothing here of any external significance, as at Bredon for instance, just a massive tower, with nave and chancel of the Perpendicular and Decorated period respectively, but inside there was much to interest. The Russell brasses of the fourteenth, fifteenth, and sixteenth centuries, with effigies upon the chancel floor, for one thing are among the best in England. There is a fine marble tomb bearing recumbent effigies of Sir Francis Russell and his wife, a Lytton of Knebworth, erected about 1700, and two others with more Russells in a leaning posture of a rather later date. In the uncensorious period of the last century when vicars and rectors all over England did uncanny or eccentric things, and provided humorous material for another generation to record with embellishments in fat volumes, the Vicar of Strensham was in no way behindhand. Tucked away with his church at the remote end of a long untravelled road, and with no parochial eye on or near him but that of the miller, there was much temptation for a parson of original mind and egotistic habit to fall into the notion that the church was his personal property in fee-simple. I think, upon the whole, that this particular divine went one better than most even of his type or period.

For he tore off the precious brass on the chancel floor that covered the tomb of one of the most illustrious of the Russells, and deposited therein the body of his wife and then his father-in-law, replacing the knightly effigy with an inscription to these worthy souls and to himself. And when death ended his reign at Strensham he had himself deposited on the top of his relations in the knightly tomb, which, as the outrage had been already committed, did not greatly signify. He also signalized his period of residence by flooring the vicarage pigsties with tombstones from the churchyard.

Most of the church is thirteenth century, but there is a barrel roof of a much later period, and what is really curious, the present seating of panelled box pews dates from the time of Henry the Eighth, though they have been painted yellow. A gallery at the west end is fashioned from the materials of a former rood screen, and its ancient front is decorated with fresco panels of the Tudor period, representing saints, bishops, and apostles, all in wonderful preservation. Strensham, as noted, is the birthplace of Samuel Butler, of "Hudibras" renown, and there is a monument in the church to that worthy and caustic soul, though his remains lie in St. Paul's, Covent Garden. It has been mentioned that the Russells of Strensham suffered greatly for their adherence to the king's side in the Civil War. At the surrender of Worcester in July 1646, after a desperate resistance of some two months, Sir William Russell was the only officer whom the victors excluded from the terms of capitulation, but his companions vowed that they would sooner die than purchase their own lives on such terms. Sir William, however, hushed all protests and declared that as he had only one life to lose he could not lose it in a better

cause, and went gaily to surrender himself. But nothing worse eventually befell him than an exceptionally severe measure of sequestration. Sir William had been an active leader in and about Worcestershire throughout the war. Strensham Castle itself had been a fortified post, and was taken once by the Parliamentary forces, who were as strong in Warwickshire as were their enemies in Worcestershire. Nothing is left of it now but the moat. On its destruction the Russells built a mansion in another part of the parish, which was replaced by the present Strensham Hall.

Samuel Butler's father was a yeoman farmer in Strensham parish with a £10-tenement of his own, and the lease of a farm of £300 a year under Sir William Russell. The boy was born in 1612, was sent to the King's School at Worcester, and is thought to have proceeded to Cambridge for a time, but at any rate he entered as clerk the household of Thomas Jefferies of Earls Croome near by, an active Justice of the Peace. Living practically as one of the family and as assistant of a leading country squire in county business, Butler enjoyed opportunities of studying both human nature and books. Dr. Nash, the historian of Worcestershire, who through an elder brother's childless marriage with the last Russell heiress, inherited the Strensham estate, speaks of having seen in his youth specimens of Butler's painting at Earls Croome, but of such indifferent quality that they had been used for patching up windows. Butler was afterwards employed in the household of Elizabeth, Countess of Kent, in Bedfordshire, where through most of the civil wars he found a quiet literary retreat with a fine library and the companionship of the learned Selden. He was secretary to one or two other people of note, and held

in vast esteem for his wit, learning, and modesty. The publication of "Hudibras" was contemporaneous with the Restoration. As a satire on the discredited Puritan party, at such a moment, and above all, as the poem delighted the court, it seemed certain that the fortunes of this minor bard of Avon were assured. The will does not seem to have been wanting, and favours were certainly bestowed, in the form of money, which tradition says Butler merely utilized for the relief of more embarrassed friends. He was made steward of Ludlow Castle, under the president of the Court of the Marches, and is of course one of the familiar memories of that historic place. While there he married a lady of the Herbert family, who, Aubrey says, had a good fortune, which through knavery and mishaps Butler enjoyed little of. The latter part of his life was spent in Rose Street, Covent Garden, and there he died in 1680 in poverty, but not in obscurity, without debts, but with no means for a suitable funeral. Yet he did not lack appreciative friends, for Westminster Abbey was proposed. Financial support, however, at the moment was only equal to a quiet funeral at his parish church of St. Paul's, Covent Garden. A few years later the further tribute was added of an inscribed monument, while in 1721 the present monument in Westminster Abbey was erected by John Barker, printer and alderman of London. There is, in fact, a good deal of mystery about Butler's life, not because the man himself cultivated any, but rather that he cared nothing for its grosser enjoyments and its fripperies. A man of extraordinary range of learning, and wholly devoted to literature, destitute of push or brass, and asking only the necessities of life, he would seem to have carried self-effacement a little too far in a careless age; though whether the poverty which witty versifiers

flung at the head of the court and public after his death, was acute or comparative is not clear. At any rate, Butler's own pride as well as his modesty seems to have stood no little in his way, and anecdotes are told of the indignation with which, in the later and more indigent period of his life, he rejected the proffered gifts of great persons. For there were no two opinions about his merits and deserts. One might fancy that though only a Strensham yeoman's son, the temperament of one of Nature's gentlemen had developed into something more definite through close association with families who may be fairly supposed to have treasured, unpolluted by the court, the best ideals of English life, and given Butler such rare and worthy pride. This, at any rate, is what the friends of his old age seem to imply, even if it were not plain enough in the memorial they raised to him in the Covent Garden church :

> A few plain men to pomp and state unknown
> O'er a poor bard have raised this humble stone ;
> Victim of zeal, the matchless "Hudibras",
> How few, alas! disdain to cringe and cant
> When 'tis the mode to play the sycophant.
> But oh, let all be taught from Butler's fate,
> Who hope to make their fortunes by the great,
> That wit and pride are always dangerous things
> And little faith is due to Court and King.

I have already alluded to Bredon Hill as by far the most conspicuous physical fact in the whole valley of the Avon. It is not often that you have an isolated mass nearly a thousand feet high and ten or a dozen miles round its base, in what may be styled the domesticated parts of England. Nor is Bredon, with all the ground it covers, a group of hills, but it slopes upon every side at varying gradations to a single summit of more or less level and grassy sward. It is, of course, an outlier of the Cotswolds, which range

remains an unbroken wall upon the right, but gradually receding from us throughout these chapters as we ascend the Avon. Here upon Bredon the Cotswolds are upon quite intimate terms, and their main range but four or five miles away from the foot of this huge straggler. From the top of the Malverns the hill of Bredon fills the eye in the middle distance to the south-west, like a great whale's back humped up above the opening of the Avon valley with the Cotswolds laying their trail behind them till they break with unexpected abruptness in the high sharp headlands above Cheltenham. There is nothing wild about Bredon, nor has it any precipitous features to speak of, nor any boldness of outline; its flanks are not abandoned to sheep and Nature, or, in other words, to crisp turf and ferns or gorse like the Malverns, for the two are as different in formation as they are in contour. Tillage and hedgerows, the big timber of more than one park, spinneys and rotation grasses, all climb a long way up Bredon as they do up the opposing heights of Cotswold. Massive as it is, distinguished too in its domination of the Avon valley, when the stranger gets to close quarters he might be apt to think it just a little too domestic, for its very respectable altitude, and that it does not " keep itself to itself " as such a hill might perhaps be expected to do by any one with a general grasp of British hill scenery. The circle of eight or ten villages that so picturesquely hug its foot throw their influence a long way up the hillside and leave but a few acres of natural turf upon the summit. This draping of Bredon with fields and hedges and woods and park lands may to some of course commend itself. For my part, I like a hill or a range of any height to shake itself free of the trammels that fittingly adorn the lower

world as soon as may reasonably be, and present the contrast which seems its mission, together with that subtle suggestion of mystery and aloofness that should surely belong to the appeal of an open hilltop to the world below.

Just beyond the mouth of Avon and across the Severn there lies a county distinguished for the number of isolated hills of moderate height it throws up inconsequently here and there about its surface, nearly all of which are luxuriantly clad with the foliage of deciduous trees—not scrub pines. These eminences scattered over Herefordshire are admirable, though Heaven forbid that our open hills and mountains of greater stature should be afforested and æsthetically ruined. But Bredon is a little too big and important for the homely trappings of the low country, if one may use such a metaphor, to encroach as they do so close upon its summit. The prospect from this one is notable and far-reaching, but as I worked my way up, on the Avon and steepest side, I rather resented travelling for a long distance quite near the top, through beds of nettles waist-high and the feel of the rough and knotty clay surface of the grass beneath, and that too among fences which would not be shaken off till almost the last moment. Bredon, in short, is not a hospitable and alluring hill to the rambler in the same sense as its fellows in other parts of the county, though, as a matter of fact, Gloucester actually claims a good slice of it. Clent and Woodbury, and of course the Malverns, bare their breasts of virgin, bracken-sprinkled turf to the unrestricted movements of the climber. But Bredon suggests potential notices to trespassers upon all sides and the whole way up, and might almost intimidate the considerate and sensitive wanderer. As a matter of fact the stranger of reasonable behaviour

may, I think, venture anywhere, and so far as I noticed, during a fairly long sojourn within touch of the hill, there was no sort of anxiety to achieve its modest conquest manifested by strangers or natives. The topmost plateau, however, is pleasant turf enough, and having reached it one immediately encounters, standing near together, a rude prehistoric monolith known as the "Banbury stone", and a comparatively modern tower of observation, erected by a long-departed country squire. But the pilgrim, when he has reached this culmination of his not very exacting efforts, will surely, if the atmosphere remain unclouded, defer attention to such minor matters in the glorious prospect which bursts upon him and that too almost of a sudden, from the western ascent.

It is not, to be sure, quite such as that afforded by the Worcestershire beacon on the Malvern Hills, whose mountainous-looking range, not a dozen hills away, seizes the very first glance thrown from here across the Severn. But then where is there a prospect quite like that one in respect to variety of surface and of human interest, in short, of such significance? What is more to the purpose, however, of readers of this little book, so far as any purpose can be served by dwelling on the outlook from a hilltop, you can follow the windings of the Avon from the top of Bredon, with a gleam here and there of its waters, to Pershore and to Evesham. And beyond Evesham you may readily throw the eye over the rich, gentle, undulations through which the Avon winds to Stratford; you can follow, too, the low confusion of hills that bounds the valley on the north or north-west, or again upon the other side the sharp curves of the loftier Cotswold wall ending with fine accentuation in the distant and memorable ridge of Edgehill. Nor least, perhaps, if susceptible to a first

glance at regions that have acquired fame of another kind throughout England, you can look right down upon the rich vale of Evesham, whose claim to be called the garden of England, unlike most others, has really some logic in it. A red soil, too, is the best of groundwork for any landscape to rest upon. Upon this one, sprinkled with hamlets and churches, are spread the vast orchards of the famous Pershore plum and others of apples and pears whence flow perennial and invigorating streams of cider and perry. Doctors, I am told, are everywhere expressing their deliberate opinion that the first of these at any rate is a positive enemy to gout and rheumatism, and as no one could possibly get "forrader" on cider as now manufactured in these parts, one may assume, if rashly, that the most fanatic temperance trumpeter would not wish to submerge so innocuous an industry in rivers of ginger beer. There are many other things of profit, raised by intensive culture in the vale of Evesham, which cannot truthfully be said to adorn the landscape. For neither fields of asparagus, nor strawberries, nor French beans, nor red currants, are in real life things of harmony or beauty in five or ten acre plots. But these interludes, with such small show as they might make at a distance, blend readily with the subdued reddish tone that glimmers everywhere through the green. And, after all, pasture and hayfield and waving grain strike their note freely as elsewhere in any survey of the vale of Evesham, while woods mantle in abundance round country seats, and hedgerow, timber, that unfailing solace of even the tamest English scenery, luxuriates here also, where the landscape is anything but tame, and that, too, in exceptional abundance. For looking over the southern edge of the flat top of Bredon towards the adjacent Cotswolds and their foothills, you have a somewhat differing prospect.

From more distant Broadway to Winchcomb, and from Winchcomb on to Cleeve, overlooking Cheltenham, you have an altogether more broken outlook, a happy procession of folding hillsides and combes draped here and there by a curtain of hanging woodland. Nearer yet, in the valley between, which is only crossed laterally by trifling brooks stealing unseen towards the Avon, are other isolated upstanding hills not greatly lower than Bredon itself in height, but altogether overawed by that assertive monster.

And though Bredon, to be sure, is not the Worcestershire beacon, it so entirely overlooks the Severn that you can realize what this western rival of the Thames has meant in English history, with sufficient clarity; even from here upon its other bank, you may picture if you choose the wide impassable brackish lagoon that at the Roman invasion sagged upwards to Bewdley and the Shropshire border, and for centuries afterwards made cleavages that cannot be overestimated. On the farther shores a broken sea of hills, even now another country altogether from this upon which Bredon stands, fades away into the mountains of Wales. Even before the time of the Romans one is fairly assured by their operations that the Severn was a great racial boundary. Upon this side were the Cornivii, and after their conquest upon the further shore lay the indomitable Silurians, who under their chief Caractacus, as Tacitus describes to us, gave the Roman generals such long and arduous campaigns. In the Saxon times, after their first conquering armies had crossed the Cotswolds and devastated the Severn valley to Shrewsbury, and in much later days when the Mercians extended a peaceful rule into Herefordshire, it is tolerably certain the Celt across the Severn remained in great force upon the soil.

One feels as strongly that upon this side the Severn the Saxon was as much in evidence in blood as in domination. Every one who is concerned with such things would pronounce the Avon valley to have been before the Norman Conquest practically as Saxon or English as Wiltshire. But as late as Cromwell's time the Welsh language was commonly spoken in the streets of Hereford, and till quite recent times was the mother-tongue of fragments even of trans-Severn Gloucestershire, while Monmouth, trenching on the tidal shores of the expanding river, is racially a Welsh county. Worcestershire again, north of the Avon valley, was almost a forest wilderness even east of the Severn till quite late Saxon times, and west of it still more so, thereby greatly helping to accentuate the cleavage. Offa, King of Mercia, had his dyke, that we all know, dividing Herefordshire and Saxon colonies from the Welsh, beyond a doubt. But we know also of Welsh communities on this side of it retaining Welsh laws, yet absolutely loyal to the Saxon earls. The moment, again, that you cross the Severn to-day the Welsh accent begins to make some faint assertion. There is nothing of it in the Avon valley or on the Cotswold Hills. One might continue the survey into the Middle Ages, when war was the chronic state of the Welsh marches, and if the chief conflict seldom reached the bank of the Severn, the men who lived there were involved by service in its turmoil and responsibilities, while those upon the hither side led as peaceful lives in the interval of great national civil wars as the men of Devon or Wiltshire. As embodying that suggestion of a boundary which the name of Severn conveys, one may recall the scene in "Henry IV", where Shakespeare makes Percy, Mortimer, and Glyndwr divide the realm of England between them, and how the Severn was

naturally cast as the frontier of the kingdom of Wales. Nor was this scheme of partition a mere figment of Shakespeare's brain, but a sufficiently accurate presentation of the " tripartite convention " entered into by the three partners in the fourth year of Glyndwr's war. The Severn in this connection is greater in history than the Thames; such racial or political divisions as that great river marked in prehistoric times may or may not have meant as much as the frontier of the Silurian nation. But in Saxon times the age-long conflict of Celt and Teuton had no sort of parallel in the quarrels of Saxon kingdoms. Much more, however, than these definite blood wars the sense of boundary remained long and always and for good reason about the Severn. " The land beyond Severn " is one of the fixed geographical phrases of almost all our history and meant a great deal. The river itself, one might almost fancy, marked its character by a compromise between Welsh and Midland. It is neither rocky like the Wye, nor muddy like the Avon. Shakespeare, with his felicitous accuracy of touch, sings of it as " sandy-bottomed Severn ", which precisely describes it and it alone of big rivers. Even the salmon, as we know, treat it absolutely as a line of demarcation, rejecting utterly any acquaintance with the tributaries on its eastern shore. Everywhere from Shrewsbury to its mouth its passage marks a division in all things either immediate or impending for any one with eyes to see or ears to hear.

From the top of Bredon the whole of this trans-Severn country shows a broken heaped up surface. What with the Malverns near by, the Clee and Stretton ranges beyond, the long line of the Brecon mountains and the Radnor moors and Glamorgan highlands, the whole west may be described, in the language of

metaphor, as in a state of unrest and agitation, while nearer and more southerly are the upstanding billowy ridges that carry the forest of Dean and follow the Wye to its confluence, with the broad tidal waters of the greater river as it opens out towards the Severn sea. That such a magnificent vantage point as Bredon should lack the traces of ancient fortification is unthinkable. As a matter of fact, there are two camps: the one with a single rampart about 160 by 70 yards in diameter and known as Conderton; the other, enclosing the Banbury stone and the tower, is on the spot where we ascended the hill and is known as Kemerton. This last is triangular in shape, defined on the accessible side by a double ditch, but on the north and west protected by the escarpments which here give the crown of the hill a touch of boldness, and as a matter of fact entail for the last fifty feet or so no little scrambling. On the farther edge are two curious monoliths known as the *king and queen*, where till recently a manor court was periodically held. The smooth top of the hill, too, was in former days, as in so many similar situations, the scene of village pastimes, in which the swains of a simpler generation competed in feats of strength, caring nothing then for the meretricious glitter of distant towns and the glamour of their gregarious anxious life.

CHAPTER III

BREDON TO EVESHAM

When Bredon Hill puts on his hat,
Ye men of the Vale beware of that:
When Bredon Hill doth clear appear,
Ye men of the Vale have nought to fear.

IF I have seemed to cavil somewhat at Bredon simply in its character of a very noble hill, unable to detach itself sufficiently from lowland civilization for a perhaps capricious taste, this very quality gives charm to many of the habitations that lie around it, and use its slopes as it were for their own greater adornment. A good instance of this confronts one on descending again toward the banks of Avon in the fine old Tudor house of Woollas Hall, perched about a third of the way up the slopes and spreading its timbered parklands much higher than that. It is a beautiful old house, and none the worse for not being overlarge, and of singularly sequestered and alluring situation, and Nash gives the derivation as a corruption of *Wolves Hill*. A gabled house of Cotswold stone, its interior still remains in keeping with its period, and contains among other things the portrait of that hapless Robert Wyntour, who was dragged into association with Catesby in the Gunpowder Plot, suffered with his brothers the extreme and hideous penalties of treason, and whose moated house of Huddington, forlorn, deserted,

ECKINGTON CROSS

but still intact, has survived for three centuries the ruin of its owners.

The Vampages were lords of Woollas in the fifteenth century, and their heiress married a Hanford, whose descendants in the male line were here within easy memory and are still in possession on the female side. This is a fine instance of continuous occupation, and taken together with the beauty of the house and the romantic nature of the site, would appeal to the dullest dog. What a perennial sensation this would be in Surrey? Fortunately perhaps for the owners it is tucked away on a fold of Bredon Hill and in a country where such instances are by no means unknown. Not a dozen miles from this very spot, but outside our line of progress, I know an exquisite black and white sixteenth century manor house whose owners and occupants have been there in the male line and in direct succession a century longer than the building itself!

Quite a group of villages lie hereabout within a mile or two of one another. Eckington and Birlingham on the river, the two Combertons and Elmley Castle more immediately under the hill. The course of the Avon from Tewkesbury to Pershore is almost due north, and Eckington is nearly opposite Strensham church, in which neighbourhood is the first lock above Tewkesbury. Eckington church has a fine embattled western tower with curious gargoyles worthy of notice. Though greatly disfigured by a north aisle of late date it still retains a Norman arcade upon the south side of the nave and a Norman door with zigzag mouldings. In the chancel is one of those family monuments in effigy, that for me, and I fancy for many of us, have an immense fascination. This one, as might be expected, is of a Hanford and his wife, *temp.* 1616. Supported by a baker's dozen of sons and daughters all dutifully

kneeling and reduced in stone or alabaster to that prodigious uniformity of filial piety which stimulates the more one's speculations as to what they were severally like ; which of the sons were a blessing to their parents and which of them perhaps brought their grey hairs prematurely to the splendours of this gorgeous resting-place. Yet what models of devotion, what examples of piety they all look, and what a varied tale no doubt hangs upon the inscrutable procession ! And I am speaking generally, of course, as one may well do in a region so abounding as this one in monumental effigies.

The fact that you seldom encounter a family group numbering less than double figures on these sixteenth and seventeenth century tombs, has sometimes suggested the fancy that a less full quiver was a matter of reproach to the ancients, and certainly one not to be paraded for posterity. The string of young women always seems, somehow, less interesting, their attitude more in harmony with the lives one sees them in fancy leading. Their careers contained less suggestion of variety and fewer dramatic possibilities. They married more freely beyond a doubt than their twentieth century successors. I recall the twentieth century aunt, that familiar repository of family traditions whom most of us know, that amiable spinster whose genealogical reputation rests on the brief she holds for the greater glorification of her tribal forbears. I know her so well with her delightful cocksureness and her beautiful ignorance of old social England, her gentle prattle of the taint of trade, the exclusive devotion of the family, the Army, the Church, and the Bar, and other shibboleths of the day before yesterday. And Aunt Maria " who knows all about these things " is the final appeal, as it were, of so tre-

mendous if indifferent a following, that she must excuse me for taking her name in vain in the interests of truth and verity. I can hear her comfortably disposing of the hands of the six dutiful young women kneeling at the head of the mount among as many country squires, oblivious of arithmetic or of the fact that the Tudor or Jacobean squire was not permitted a harem. And what would she do with the five practically penniless sons, who kneel behind the elder brother in doublet and sword. Here I feel quite sure she would settle them quite simply in the Church, the Navy, the Army, and the Bar, with a mysterious government appointment perhaps for the odd one, and this in all the fullest nineteenth century significance of these honourable professions. And who did the five daughters marry? For one only is due by the law of averages to an eldest son. Some of them beyond doubt, and with the full approval of their parents, married gentlemen whose situation and avocation would in the retrospect horrify Aunt Maria and utterly shatter her gentle delusions. We may partly account for the daughters' fortunes by a glance at the probable fate of the five sons. And here again I do not mean the Hanford progeny that have fortuitously aroused this dissertation, but any of these many hundred groups of olive branches that kneel or stand obscure and nameless to a stranger's eye around their glorified and immortalized parents. One probably, as we are in Worcestershire was apprenticed to a clothier in Worcester, Tewkesbury, or Kidderminster, and if fortunate became one himself, a stout burgher, and alderman, and progenitor of substantial shopkeepers, and when he "carried" (the expression is still used in rural America) his wife on a pillion behind him over the miry roads to keep Christmas with the squire at the old house, you may be quite certain that

not a glimmer of awkwardness or consciousness of any social relapse existed in the minds of either the ladies or the gentlemen. One was the eldest brother, the other a younger one, that was all, and the whole situation was absolutely normal.

There were no London airs and graces and standards. They were all rustic folk together if well-bred ones, and local interests were all sufficient in normal times. If the squire had a little loose cash he very likely joined with his burgher brother in the venture of a cargo of cloth or hats shipped down the Severn from Kidderminster, or Bewdley to Bristol. He would have been astounded if you had told him that such a proceeding soiled his escutcheon. There was a good deal of difference between a Tudor squire and a feudal baron of the preceding centuries, though the first was sometimes a descendant of the last.

And what of the other younger brothers? If a mercer in London offered an opening, we know very well the chance was jumped at. There was no standing army, but a few household regiments monopolized by the nobility and their favourites; but the career of a soldier of fortune in an English corps in foreign service or in foreign legions might possibly account for one of six sons. With the naval ventures of the west country, and the Cinque Ports, we may be quite sure a squire's son of an inland county had rarely any traffic. But the plantations, Virginia, Maryland, the Carolinas, and the West Indies particularly, might fairly be credited with one of a large family.

The Church—that depends on the period, and this one was far from the day of the family name in the family living. A mercer or a clothier was much better than the Church, a pretty poor livelihood and prospect in the seventeenth century, save when

exceptional brains promised an Oxford fellowship or quick preferment.

The Bar was a later development of younger son enterprise, when squires grew rich and commercial activity waxed in later Georgian times. In earlier days it was an exclusive and expensive luxury, more adapted to heirs in their father's lifetime or men of special aptitude. The lists of beneficed clergy in this county and such others as I have been concerned with, do not suggest any passion of the younger son for the Church at this period, and perhaps no wonder. There were plenty of other openings. The lease of a farm not uncommonly, or, again, the calling of an attorney. Nor must one forget those positions, possible at that period, in the households of the great nobility. Something of an upper servant, perhaps, but softened by the common table in the banqueting hall, also by custom and the possibility of fortune and advancement for a likely youth, who as a gentleman was eligible if his parents could justify it. I shall be accused of diffuseness in thus tarrying among the tombs, I am quite sure, by some critics. But educated Americans, if I know them at all, and I ought to, care for such things, and they greatly frequent this pleasant region, as every one knows. Aunt Maria flourishes in America too, as my American readers will bear me out in saying, particularly in the South. I have known intimately at least a score of them on their native heath; like our own, encyclopædias in all matters of kinship—recent kinship, that is—but yet more unpractical and idealistic in their social pictures of the past, even their own comparatively recent past. But when they pursue it to the original emigrant, the squire's son, if by good luck he is not a lord's—the brother, as we have seen, of

the haberdasher, the clothier, deemed then more lucky than he—the shade of this adventurous young man would be amazed at the primal dignity with which time and distance have invested him.

At any rate he looks well here, and perhaps a little misleading in the dummy procession with sword and ruff, even though at the moment he were clad in deerskin coat and moccasins, and shaking with ague in a clap-board shanty on the shores of the Chesapeake. But, of course, there were some families, even then when a lord was a lord, and of whom there were only sixty in the House of Peers, who were practically as great as noblemen and lived upon a higher plane. We are concerned here, however, with the rule and not the exception.

Just beyond Eckington the Pershore road crosses the Avon by one of those red brick bridges of many arches—six in this case—that are such a familiar and harmonious feature of the stream. Birlingham, set in a horseshoe loop of the river to the east of the road, follows almost immediately. Lying among meadows and orchards this village has a more well-cared-for air even than its neighbours in a region where extreme picturesqueness of village architecture is not often associated with dilapidation, a fact that may be due to a group of gentlemen's houses centring in and around it. The church was originally Norman, but, with the exception of a perpendicular embattled tower with a small corner spire, has been practically rebuilt in modern times. But even a fact, so disappointing always to the stranger, has a little indirect interest here, as the rebuilding was largely achieved at the cost of a brother of the poet Walter Savage Landor, who was its rector for forty years. The poet himself predeceased the parson, through dying at a ripe

GREAT COMBERTON

age some forty years ago. Sons of a north-country landed family, the sharp contrast between the careers of the two brothers suggests itself irresistibly while standing in Birlingham churchyard. The poet who, in a moment of youthful impetuosity, and fascinated by the romance of Llanthony Abbey, bought the whole valley in which it stood, achieved speedy failure as a Welsh squire, and went abroad for nearly the whole of his long life ; the other one, to strike roots in the next county of so exceptionally deep and intimate a kind. Nafford Lock and mill are close to Birlingham and make one of those many pleasant and brief interludes in the river's journey, where its placid mood is lashed into a lively foaming pool, and its normal currents so slow and deep, expanded for the moment into shallows bubbling over gravelly beds.

Great and Little Comberton look over towards Birlingham, the former two miles away on the farther side of the stream, but away from the main road and lying under the lee of Bredon Hill, the other a mile on towards Pershore. Great Comberton church, with embattled western tower, decorated nave, and modern chancel stands just aloof from its pleasant village and is worth a visit for its curious wagon roof, which covers a nave of uncommon breadth for its short length. Little Comberton is a mere hamlet, but its old church, rising above a well-wooded graveyard at the parting of three pleasant and leafy ways, would give the traveller pause, if only for its perfection as a roadside scene, for across the way a group of old half-timbered houses, fronting the church gate and flanked by an orchard, rounds off the picture. The body of the church, attached to an early perpendicular tower, is curious, with a chancel overtopping the nave and a double-gabled south transept. The north

doorway is Norman and has a remarkable tympanum showing a cross surrounded by several comical ornaments said to be intended for clouds, while some of the windows contain fragments of old glass.

Of the three roads which meet here, one leads back for a mile to the northern foot of Bredon Hill, beneath which lies the most picturesque of all its villages. Certainly in its lavish display of black and white houses Elmley Castle justifies the distinction. The grassy foundations of a castle, owned and not seldom occupied by the Beauchamps, Earls of Warwick, account for part of the name, and one may fairly suppose that the fine display of elm timber in the hall grounds, showing up well against the green background of Bredon, which is here both steep and grassy, may have had remote ancestors which accounted for the rest. The church, too, in its spacious level graveyard, lying back from the two wide streets of the old timber-built village against the foot of the steep hill, is a dignified and venerable specimen of, for the most part, Perpendicular work with a massive Norman tower. Free from the wearisome crocketed ornamentation which, to my thinking, is such a blemish to the obvious merits of the Perpendicular, the plain crenellation of the long, flat-roofed north aisle and the gable of the north chancel and the massive porch, set off to perfection the old flagged and gabled roofs of nave and chancel showing behind.

The manor was granted to the Savage family, and within the church is a magnificent altar tomb of date 1616, bearing three of their effigies, two men and a woman, with great and instructive elaboration of contemporary costume. There is also a fine half-recumbent marble effigy of the first Earl of Coventry, *temp.* 1699. The Savages were squires here for three

centuries and have only lapsed within living memory. Bishop Bonner is said to have been an illegitimate son of the house. In the churchyard is a curious sundial about eight feet high, bearing among other ornamentation the arms of the family. At Netherton, half a mile from the village, there is the curious remnant of a very ancient little church long used for secular purposes. It still contains some beautiful Norman doorways and an Early English bell turret in perfect preservation. On the tympanum of a doorway is carved a flying dragon. The history of this forlorn relic of mediæval piety was quite elusive so far as my efforts to gather something of it were concerned. The pilgrim, not bound for the noble shrine at Pershore as we are, may bend round the north and western side of Bredon Hill, and by lovely twisting lanes, flowery ways in very truth, as are all in this rich country, he will get eventually to Ashton-under-the-Hill, with the village cross and its due complement of delectable buildings of timber and wattle or of rich Cotswold stone.

Still hugging the green base of the presiding genius of the vale he will pass through the village of Overbury and one seat of the Martins, of the well-known London banking-house, but an old Worcestershire stock, planted here for many generations and to good purpose. And Overbury completes the long circuit of the hill, for it is but a journey thence to Bredon Norton and Bredon, where in fancy we tied our boat, hired from Mr. Bathurst of Tewkesbury, in the last chapter. But in this one we have at Little Comberton got within touch of Pershore, and a pleasant winding highway, after a mile or so, crosses the Avon again, and Pershore, clustering around its beautiful abbey church tower, lies in front of us slightly raised above

the vale. Here is another of those mellow red brick bridges of many years and many arches, that are so well attuned to the local atmosphere and to the Avon's gentle streams. For the moment, however, these last are making one of those sporadic efforts to emulate the stir of a trout stream that they are not often moved to without adventitious aid. And as the stream expands beneath the bridge—leaving a deep pool in the centre, but rippling otherwise over gravelly shallows, I have often loitered and hung over the parapet of the central arch of the old bridge and watched the chub rising at flies and surface food. Sailing out like trout into the livelier water and like trout poising themselves motionless near the surface, they are readily visible, while every now and again they break the water after some drowned fly or fragment of refuse from the mill above. Our friend the chub is naturally addicted to lying in deep, secluded water, beneath some overhanging leafy bank, and sucking quietly in such winged morsels as come his way, and sometimes to his undoing a well-presented imitation with a sharp hook in it. But when Mr. Chub gets into lively water, and of late years those of the Severn basin have shown a quite inconvenient predilection for it, and thrusts himself up into the mountain streams, he is obviously possessed of the conceit that he will make a good imitation of the nobler native, and seizes the angler's trout fly too often, as I can amply testify, in places where he has no business whatever, and is not wanted at all. But here in the Avon and the Severn is his natural habitat, and speaking from observation only, but from an extremely prolonged and, I may fairly claim, a sympathetic observation, I should opine that the chub, the roach, and all other fish that haunt the Avon, leave the lures of its thousand

anglers as severely alone as is possible for any fish to be capable of without destroying the last spark of that hope which springs eternal in the angler's breast. I do not remember whether the immortal Izaak says anything of the Avon. He probably fished it, as we know he was at Worcester, and his wife lies buried there. But things have changed in this particular vastly since his day. Whole stretches of the river, as those of the Severn, are literally lined with float fishermen as close as the decencies of even float fishermen permit, and that is pretty handy to one another, to take no count of those occasional solitaries that you find planted in lonely spots over the hundred and odd miles of bank.

I have watched both the Avon and the Severn angler in batches of twenty, in groups of three or four, in pairs, and in singles. I do not mean cynically passed them by after the manner of Dr. Johnson and his followers with a foolish sneer, but, on the contrary, with the interest of a fellow-angler. I have watched them in all conceivable parts of both rivers between Worcester and Stratford for considerable periods, fascinated by the almost inconceivable discrepancy of the combined effort and the poverty of result. I have watched them in June and July, in August and September, and less patiently their thinned ranks in drear November. I have watched them in the morning, the afternoon, and the evening, in cloud and sunshine, in dry weather and in wet. I have occasionally even sat on the bank with one or other and listened to the relation of red letter-days spent upon the very self-same swim, and watched the pitilessly steady quill, with sympathetic and ever sanguine eye, drift slowly past again and again, or sail round and round in one of those likely little whirlpools that a thrusting willow

and a hollow bank provide betimes for the float fisherman. And with all this, quite inadequately conveying, as a matter of fact, the extent of effort that circumstances have brought before my notice, I solemnly protest I have never seen a single fish caught, and only once or twice witnessed the familiar and unmistakable sign on any angler's part that he had had a bite. Yet all these enthusiasts, respectable working men mostly, with a fair sprinkling of a higher degree: young men and old, boys and greybeards, every one, with rare exception, out of conversational touch with his neighbour, were beyond doubt happy: men unmistakably of a clear conscience, or they would not spend their holiday in such prolonged and entire communion alone with it. Men of reflective habit, too, beyond a doubt are these, philosophers perhaps some of them, inarticulate poets others, and like hundreds of fishermen keenly alive to the whisper of the reeds, the sway of the willows, the scent of the meadows, and all those blends of sight and sound and sense that are inseparably but indescribably bound up with the mysterious fascination that centres as strongly on a quill float by a reedy bank as on a March Brown on a mountain rapid.

There may be loafers among them, and others perchance may be finding peace from a scolding wife, but most, no doubt, are sportsmen of the sort independent of crowds, wagers, public-houses, and noise. But of such perseverance under such discouragement I have never seen anywhere the like. At the old mill of Cleeve, that most delectable of all spots upon the Avon, where between the flowery meads and lush hedgerows of Salford on the one hand, and the bosky Marle cliff on the other, the river with some assistance exhibits every kind of captivating humour, I became by chance and for much of one afternoon a witness

to the patient endeavours of half a dozen well-armed and prosperous-looking anglers down for the day from Birmingham. Here the half-hours sped and no sign came from thorn bush, willow, reed bed, or mill bridge, or any of the various vantage points at which the several members possessed themselves in patience and isolation. I could see all their rods projecting over the stream and pitching anon a hook re-baited with a fresh worm and renewed hope into the water. Feeling that the first thrills of anticipation were well over, I ventured to approach the nearest *piscator*, as the guide-book would designate him, an elderly gentleman, whom I had long since assigned to the legal profession, and asked him the same old question by way merely of a formula, for had I not long been the lazy witness of his blighted hopes. On receiving the same old answer, I asked him if he had ever enjoyed any sport here. He shook his head and declared that the natives caught all the fish. To that I felt justified in giving a warm denial, having seen the natives fishing by the hundred and with no less futility than himself. "Then," he said, "I give it up." Not the fishing, for I am sure he has had many a half-day there from Birmingham since, but the problem. Yet there they are, as any one may see at any point, sailing complacently across the stream—roach and dace and chub, and, for aught I know, perch and bream and rudd, qualified, I should say, unless I have been the victim of some gigantic fantasy, or haunted the Avon upon a year when the angler's star was in collision with every cross-current in the firmament, to give points in the matter of education to any Itchen trout. The Avon, I might add, is noted for the quality of its eels, which fetch the top price in the London market, and run up from the tidal Severn when every miller on the river

reckons in making something substantial by his traps.

I do not know whether that famous little Severn eel, the lamprey, comes much up the Avon. But the potted lamprey, of which Worcester and Gloucester make a speciality, is not a thing to be passed by, as akin to potted shrimp or salmon as we understand them, but a delicacy of altogether another order.

It is difficult to understand how it came about that the destruction of this bridge at Pershore by the Royalists, after Charles the First crossed it on his retirement from Oxford, could have caused such a loss in human life as Clarendon and the local annals tell us took place in June 1644. The king, who had come through Cropthorne, crossed the bridge with 6000 men and thirty coaches of ladies *en route* for Worcester. In destroying it, for obvious and precautionary reasons, workmen and others to the number variously stated, but given by Clarendon as high as eighty, were crushed or drowned. The entry to Pershore is in keeping with its generally peaceful and old-fashioned air. For a great water-mill, hardly venerable nor yet on the other hand disturbingly modern of aspect, fills all the foreground by the roadside and strikes a singularly appropriate note of welcome to a town of wholly monastic origin and traditions.

The Avon surges out to the margin of the road from beneath the mill with fine commotion, and spreads itself in a wide and noble basin of froth and foam flake and streaming, gravelly shallow. To those of us who by association and habit are hopelessly committed to the mountain or even the chalk stream, and are constitutionally incapable of seeing eye to eye with the Midlander, the East Anglian, or the prophet of the sluggish stream, the Avon is constantly uttering,

PERSHORE BRIDGE

as it were, protests and not wholly ineffective ones. If any sluggish river can soften the northern or western heart it is Shakespeare's Avon. For just as you are wearying a little of the even and uneventful tide, comes in the nick of time one of those delightful interludes, man-made though they be. These pleasant scenes of mellow brick mill, and froth, and old stone weir, and ancient-paved ford, and spreading foliage have a character of their own, which might, as I have said, almost soften the heart of a Welshman or a Scot. The Avon, too, might fairly put forward in extenuation of a muddy bottom or lack of clarity that her Elizabethan owners, who first made her navigable and dammed her natural tides and erected locks, have much to answer for in this respect. For there is no saying with what vivacity she might have sped in ancient times over a clean and gravelly bed, though neither trout nor salmon we know would ever have anything to say to her, which is significant.

Pershore is in appearance everything that it should be, for an ancient little town that concerns itself chiefly with distributing the produce of orchards and in exhibiting the beautiful remains of the abbey, which in dim ages gave it birth. A single wide and long street accounts for most of it. It is a place architecturally typical of this west midland district that lies between the Cotswold stone country and the industrial modernity that has extinguished the flavour of the past, if not all details of it, in north Worcestershire. A pleasant, sleepy, Georgian flavour greets you at the " Utterance ", as the ancients have it, and as it trails away northward towards the Worcester road its humbler half remains inoffensive and unobtrusive, while a wide, square midway opens towards the abbey, otherwise the parish church and its bowery

precincts. A hostelry of ample proportions, of Quarter Sessions, coaching and assembly room complexion, but of neither Tudor architecture nor yet up-to-date assertiveness at the very heart of the town leaves you no shadow of a doubt as to where you should sleep or lunch. Such is Pershore. The local antiquarian, I am quite sure, could take you behind many of these sedate eighteenth and nineteenth century fronts and show you an oak staircase here, or an escutcheon there of ancient memory. But we cannot afford here to be so meticulous. The Abbey Church is Pershore, so far as we and practically all other visitors are concerned.

Less fortunate than Tewkesbury, all that has been left by the smashers and plunderers at the Dissolution of the Church of the great Benedictine House of Pershore, is the tower, choir, and south transept. But even this remnant of a building, the vanished nave of which was 180 feet long, provides a parish church of dimensions, dignity, and beauty such as is given to few country towns for public worship. For the choir is a most beautiful and uplifting specimen of Early English, the pointed arches of its bays springing from clustered columns with floriated capitals, while the triforium and clerestory are associated in a manner most curious and, I imagine, almost unique in this country. The roof is vaulted and enriched with floriated bosses of the Decorated period. The choir, like the nave, was originally Norman but was destroyed by fire early in the thirteenth century and rebuilt as we see it now. The massive lantern tower, Norman in its lower half, is otherwise fourteenth century, and its interior, as seen from below, with its arcaded panels and carved string courses, is most effective, and generally held to be only matched at

Lincoln. Sir Gilbert Scott, who did the necessary restoration here nearly fifty years ago, believed it to be the work of the same hand that built the tower of Salisbury Cathedral. The north transept was spared by the Dissolution ravagers, or rather was purchased from them, but fell down in the following century. The lady chapel and the other chapels were also destroyed and the materials sold by the same hands. All that remains of the original Norman building is the lofty south transept opening out of the tower space, in which there is some good and characteristic Norman work and one or two monuments of interest. Externally this Abbey Church of the Holy Cross is well placed, like Tewkesbury and Evesham, in a well-ordered and well-timbered graveyard, abutting on the west end of the little town and opening out into the country. I have spoken of it as the parish church, but immediately adjacent, across a lane, is the small but ancient fabric of St. Andrews, a rather grim, but interesting, little building of mainly thirteenth century work, grafted on an earlier Norman church.

Though of more ancient origin Pershore Abbey came into the front rank as a Benedictine House in the tenth century. That Earl Odda, whose name, as supposed, is graven on the Saxon chapel at Deerhurst, according to "Domesday", was a great benefactor to Pershore just before the Conquest. Heavily endowed by Saxon kings and nobles it was hit hard, like its great neighbour of Worcester, Tewkesbury, and Evesham, by the heavy toll which Edward the Confessor put on its possessions for his new Abbey of Westminster. "Robbery" was the word used by all the abbots and monks of Worcestershire, and for centuries afterwards. Till the Dissolution the wide interests possessed by Westminster in this part of England were the cause

of much heart-burning to the local monasteries and indeed of no little friction. They had little enough love for one another, and the flame of mutual jealousy burned strong within them. But they all hated Westminster with a tenfold greater hatred, not only as enjoying lands which they considered had been filched from themselves, but as a local everywhere and in every sphere of life hates an outsider. There was occasionally even better reason than this, for it appears that in Edward the Second's time the Pope sent his nuncio to seize goods and crops in Pershore for a debt owed him by the Abbot of Westminster. The king, on being appealed to, was indignant, more for his own pride's sake than for that of the abbot's chattels, and sent his own men there just in time. But even then the nuncio's thunders of excommunication roared so loudly in Pershore that a somewhat humiliating compromise was submitted to. The Abbot of Pershore was summoned occasionally to Parliament, and the abbey was the third in wealth of the great Worcestershire houses, being possessed of about half the revenue enjoyed respectively by Worcester and Evesham. The temporalities of the Church in pre-Reformation Worcestershire were in greater proportion to lay property than in any shire of England, while, on the other hand, it had not been a land of great things before the Conquest, nor was it one of great barons afterwards, like its neighbours on both sides. It may be worth noting, moreover, that the little church of St. Andrew, already alluded to, was originally erected by Edward the Confessor for his abbey tenants in the manor of Pershore. The Church not only held proportionately more land here than in any other county, but such lay lords as there were in Worcestershire in the Middle Ages were mainly absentees. The

county was more than commonly forested, population proportionately thin. But the Church, including a great and powerful bishopric, was wealthy and splendid. The Avon region was probably the most open and populous part of the county, and here, close together on its banks as deadly rivals, were two of its three great monasteries, to say nothing of Tewkesbury on the verge of the county. For those of Great and Little Malvern, Bordesley and others were much smaller. No other river in England possessed three monasteries of the first rank within fifteen miles of one another. Worcestershire, not being one of those counties that have been written and talked into quite disproportionate pre-eminence among their fellows, it will probably surprise even most lovers of the past to be reminded that both Freeman and Creighton have declared it to be in many historical respects the most interesting county in England.

It can be well imagined what a cataclysm the Dissolution proved to such a region. The monastery of Pershore, like that of Tewkesbury, fell at once into obscure and sordid ownership. Like the rest of them, its beautiful buildings became a stone quarry for the benefit of insignificant and undeserving pockets, and as at Tewkesbury the townspeople appear only to have saved this remnant of their church by putting their hands in their own, and paying blackmail. One reason for the vigour with which the great Saxon monasteries in these parts, including Westminster, which had 40,000 acres in the county, survived the Norman Conquest was the outstanding personality of the famous Saxon bishop Wulfstan of Worcester, almost alone of his nation, and to a far greater extent than any other cleric among them he retained place and power, winning the confidence of the Conqueror,

and the high esteem of his ecclesiastical lieutenant, Langfranc. William, moreover, favoured the existence of Church feudatories within touch of the Welsh borders. Their hatred, amply reciprocated, of the Welsh Church, still independent of Canterbury, was one strong recommendation, and their peaceful character as regards the Crown a still stronger one.

The Reformation, which put a succession of chatelaines into the Episcopal castle of Hartlebury, may well on occasions have caused both the clergy and laity of the diocese to doubt whether the bishop as a domestic character was always a credit to the new system, and a shining example to the family life of his diocese. That indefatigable local antiquary, the late Mr. Noaks, has transcribed from the records of the House of Lords the performances of Bishop Thornburgh, who held the See of Worcester for a long period anterior to the Civil War. These are nothing less than scandalous, and suggest the connived-at machinations of an unscrupulous match-making wife and a family lost to all sense of decency, but prodigiously alive to the main chance. The kidnapping of heiresses went merrily on, along the Welsh border, while in Ireland we know it was a recognized form of enterprise in the seventeenth and early eighteenth century among the squireens. In the bishop's case, it is true, there was no midnight raid nor hedge priest to offer the best of two sorry alternatives to the victim. But the motives were the same, and the procedure in a manner worse. Bishop Thornburgh came on from Bristol in 1610, and reigned at Worcester nearly thirty years. He was of the Puritan school, and quarrelled with his deans, who were mostly for orderly ritual and the decencies of cathedral ceremonial. The bishop stored his hay

in consecrated buildings, encouraged informal gatherings who discussed theology, read Scripture aloud to one another, walked about, and even kept their hats on at the west end of the cathedral while the choir and canons were chanting the service at the other. He put his near relatives into the best things in his gift, and even met the nominations of the Crown for such appointments by the candid objection that he had already bestowed them on a son or a nephew.

But these things were done by many bishops, and till a much later date. Not even an Anglo-Welsh prelate of the eighteenth and early nineteenth century, however, would have ventured to improve the family fortunes by kidnapping wealthy minors of both sexes. For towards the close of his career, the bishop's son Thomas abducted a co-heiress of the Acton estate in the neighbourhood, aged fifteen, from her mother's house, and with the connivance of his lordship detained her for six weeks in the palace, and then with his pious father's further assistance married her. She had £4000 which, in course of time, the bishop persuaded her to apply to the liquidation of his scapegrace son's debts. Soon afterwards, she affirms in her suit, he turned her out of doors with her children, as she refused to continue relations with a husband who was obviously a proper scoundrel, and for good reasons. She sued and obtained alimony of 15s. a week, which these clerical financial operators, Bishop & Son, never paid. They were ultimately compelled to refund £180, which virtually finished a most scandalous business. Twenty years later, poor Dame Thornburgh was apparently making her living by needlework, and in a petition to the Crown described herself as co-heiress of Sir Thomas Acton, but ruined in fortune by her marriage to the bishop's son. Lest

it might be deemed that some inconceivable malignity had succeeded in representing the Episcopal household as other than they were, a further petition appears in the same records from Sir R. Willoughby, to the effect that, when he was only fourteen years of age, he had been cajoled into marrying the bishop's daughter Elizabeth. Furthermore, that by the deceit of his wife and her family, he had been defrauded of the manor of Turner's Puddle, in Dorsetshire. The said wife had long deserted him, and lived as a nun abroad, but now, having broken her vow, was living riotously. The knight prays that the rents of the manor may in future be paid to himself.

Pershore, throughout the Civil War, was in the heart of the fighting zone. It was not fortified like Evesham or Worcester, but, like Tewkesbury and many other of the open towns in these parts, was under a Royalist Governor. The one here was Sir Walter Pye of Kilpeck, in Herefordshire. Now Sir Walter, so far as my reading of the Civil Wars has served me, had no particular military talents, but I was glad of the excuse to take off my hat to the memory of a man and of a family who unostentatiously, and without any stimulating prestige of name or lineage, risked their lives and sacrificed the whole of their recently acquired wealth in behalf of two not over-worthy kings. For the Pyes were virtually new people, Sir Walter's father having made a great fortune in trade. I never pass the brushy tump where once stood Kilpeck Castle, with its perfect little Norman church near by, which the trader Pye bought from the Earls of Ormond, without a thought of that strange shortlived family story which tells of a fortune, said to reach the enormous sum of £25,000 a year, dissipated in two generations in a fashion so

curiously unselfish. At any rate, Sir Walter, the son, was for some time in command at Pershore, and though in this connexion he merely did as hundreds more, new squires and old, his son again performed the much more single-minded, if less sane, act of self-sacrifice in adhering to James II and dying with nothing to his name but the empty title of Baron Kilpeck.

Pershore was the head-quarters of Essex when that first disastrous skirmish was fought at Powick Bridge by the raw troopers of his advance guard. Through Pershore, too, came Charles in 1643 after the fatal error, as it proved, of the unsuccessful siege of Gloucester. He was racing Essex and his army of London apprentices back to the capital, a race in which it will be remembered he was by just so much to the good at Newbury as to then block the road to London, but only to fight a drawn battle which failed to stop the earl and his Londoners. The Royalists, who rode with Charles over Pershore Bridge that September day, could not have had pleasant thoughts. They were not of the kind, to be sure, which must have depressed them a year later, when they broke down the bridge; by no means even then despairing ones, but nevertheless by that time they had become accustomed to view the future with the gravest doubt. But on this earlier visit to Pershore, sanguine hopes of finishing the whole business with a combined victorious march on London had been general and justifiable. Two things had just occurred, however, which had cruelly reversed the prospect, though not, of course, quite so obviously to the high couraged men then on the way, as it turned out, to Newbury field. Nor could they know that what was to prove the turning-point of the war had

just been passed, or that their chance was gone. But still they were sufficiently conscious of a great opportunity lost, and of other unexpected developments, to give food enough for reflection to any that were capable of it.

For Gloucester, the one great stronghold of Parliament in the west, had baffled them with a heroism unmatched in any siege of the war. It had delayed them a month and that too for nothing, while a strong opinion obtained that there had been no occasion to waste even a valuable week over it. The other less obvious misfortune, but scarcely less significant, lay in the fact that Essex had raised an army of London apprentices capable of marching across England to the relief of Gloucester and defying the efforts of Rupert's cavalry to check them, even on the open sweeps of the Cotswolds. They were now on the way to fight that same raw army in more decisive and regular fashion, and to experience more fully and yet more unexpectedly what mettle it was made of. Falkland was of course at Pershore with the king on this occasion; the peace that he so ardently longed for and quite looked for in an expected victory pushed far into the background; the death that his noble spirit, rent by the distractions of his beloved country, courted, now close at hand.

The course of the Avon has so far had such a northward trend, that a fine broad highway will take you from Pershore to Worcester in about eight miles. Pershore, it may be said, possesses itself in all seeming patience a good mile and a half from its railway station on the G.W.R. main line. Many towns of greater importance are almost as unfortunate, from the mere terror which the early Victorian burgher cultivated of the primitive locomotive at close quarters.

After all, if you had been accustomed to drive from say Rugby to London, it is quite probable that the situation of the local station to a mile or two seemed a matter of perfect indifference, so great was the saving of time in any case, while its demoralizing possibilities loomed immense. It seems probable, however, that Pershore owes its aloofness not to these primitive tremors of the men of old time, but to the final loop which the river describes to the northward, thereby forbidding any attempt at greater familiarity on the part of the best intentioned line from Evesham to Worcester. After this the Avon valley assumes its normally north-eastward inclination. You may follow it to Evesham on either edge of the widish meadows through which the river makes its S-like curves. But much better than the rather dull main road on the eastern bank, or even the reasonably interesting one on the other, would be a walk by lanes or footpaths through the three villages between here and Evesham, by Wick and Cropthorne, that is to say, and over the river to Fladbury. All three stand for everything that makes the villages of the Avon contribute as much to its charm as the Avon contributes to that of its villages. The last two stand out with Bredon as worthier of notice perhaps than any of their fellows between Tewkesbury and Stratford. Wick has no such reputation, but it struck me as over-modest or overlooked by fame and admirably typical, which means something in this country of delightful villages. It is, to be sure, but a long string of cottages, many of them half timbered, standing apart in gardens that bloom with the luxuriance which belongs to a rich soil in a country of born gardeners. But the little church is worth a visit, with the village cross standing in a pasture field beside it. Very ancient, beyond

question, and of Early English character in the main, it contains a chancel, a nave of three bays, a modern north aisle, and a belfry.

With apologies for a brief excursion into things material I should greatly like to know why a vicarage was erected quite recently here at the expense of the Ecclesiastical Commissioners at a cost of £1700 for a gentleman in receipt of an official income of £170 per annum. The fact would not of course be worth mentioning if this method did not prevail all over England. Private means, one may fairly assume, cannot be taken for granted nowadays in striking an average for the future church incumbent. The vicarage looks an altogether desirable haven, but that has nothing to do with the question. Just conceive building a house, the economic rental of which would be nearly one hundred pounds a year, for future occupants enjoying a stipend of much less than twice that sum.

Surely an eight hundred pound house and another forty to the stipend would be a more sane proceeding. Why should a parson be saddled with a house of about thrice the value that any other man with the same income would elect to inhabit? Surely the much-tried country clergy have had enough of over-housing, for which in the past there was more excuse. Moreover, a layman of small means may be socially sensitive about the scale of his house, or even professionally affected by it. But a parson is quite independent of all such vulgar assessments, and his wife might fearlessly administer an establishment adapted to an income of two or three hundred a year without any thought for a censorious world.

A pleasant walk of a couple of miles up the valley skirting the meadows lands one at Cropthorne, which is deservedly of more note than Wick. The village

alone, standing upon the slope and summit of a low ridge looking over the Avon valley, has a goodly share of ancient cottages, half timbered or stone, thatched or flagged. Many of them are well poised amid a gay confusion of the flowers and fruits of the earth, upon slopes above the winding road. One or two of greater pretension thrust out well-furbished Tudor fronts and carved oak barge boards upon the highway, with pleasant and harmonious accessories which proclaim them quite obviously the haunts of what are sometimes comprehensively entitled the village gentry. Through all these is a pleasant flavour of fruit trees, in August, during which month Cropthorne comes most readily back to me, showing a fat promise of apple, pear, and plum. Over all, too, there is a soothing whisper of elm leaves and sharp lines of shade and sunlight that always seem to me to glorify black and white architecture above all other styles. At the head of the village, standing, as is meet and right, side by side, are the church and the hall with a fine outlook beyond over the valley to Fladbury and the Duke of Orleans' richly timbered uplands at Wood Norton. The hall, though I fancy of respectable age and associations, is of no special interest ; Charlton, the old manor house of the famous but extinct Worcestershire family of Dinely, being the historic mansion of the parish, though very largely rebuilt. The church consists of a pinnacled tower, nave, aisles, and a rebuilt chancel with clerestory, and a double arcade of Norman arches, while the pews are of carved oak of the seventeenth century. The most interesting features of the interior, however, are the Dinely (or Dingley) monuments. The different versions of its name, in which this famous family apparently acquiesced and even encouraged by its loose methods of signature, is disconcerting to all Worcester-

shire historians. At any rate, it seems pretty certain that when they disappeared in the beginning of the eighteenth century they were as far as ever from a settlement. Of course nobody cared two straws about spelling till quite recently. There wasn't such a thing. A person of condition would often write his own name in two or three different ways on the same page, not from illiteracy, for he may have been a good scholar, but with deliberate contempt for anything but its proper sound. Yet Aunt Maria, that amiable dragon of heraldic and genealogical mythology, whose shade we have before invoked, will tell you her branch of the Smythes always used the final "e", and were always of course Smythes! Dear innocent creature, long may she flourish! But the Dinelys, or Dingleys, overstepped phonetic principles in their free-and-easiness, and, as I remarked, vanished from the earth's stage before they could be induced to settle a question that has troubled the local historian ever since, merely, that is to say, to the extent of conscientiously recording their many acts as performed by "Francis Dingley (or Dinely) by Sir Edward Dinely (or Dingley)." And this is a pity, as it suggests the idea of their being shadowy characters, instead of for the most part strenuous ones, a little more indifferent than common to orthography. The gorgeous monument to Francis Dingley (or Dinely) of date 1624, where he and his lady lie in resplendent effigy, supported by nineteen children, some of the latter with cradles, emblematical of their brief stay at Charlton, will surely delight the visitor. Another canopy covers the effigies of the next squire, Edward Dinely (or Dingley), and his lady, kneeling face to face, a praying-desk between them. Only seven children, four boys, or men rather, on the one side, and three girls on the other, kneel here below. All these monuments and

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effigies are coloured and well preserved, and an effort at portraiture is obvious, particularly in this last one.

This Edward Dinely died at the close of the Civil War, during which the Dinelys took a leading part, politically, at any rate, on the side of the Parliament, together with the Lygons, the Salweys, and three or four other prominent Worcestershire families.

Edward Dinely was one of the sequestrators for the county, and one can hardly fancy that for him social life can have been worth living, even after the peace, in such a hotbed of Royalist ardour. But one of them, the foremost of the filial procession upon the tomb, I take it, played a disinterested and courageous part. For when the country people of this district, as in others of the more war-wracked regions, rose in despair against the indiscriminate pillaging and exactions of both sides, under the name of Club-men, Dinely headed 2000 of them who had assembled on Bredon Hill, and made a hopeless effort to prevent Rupert, with some of his cavalry, crossing the Cotswolds, only to be brushed aside like chaff.

But another of these, Thomas Dinely, interested me much more, as an old friend, who had provided me with no little entertainment at a not remote period in the more peaceful paths of literature. It was not his "History in Marble", by which he lives, if the recorded fact of such a book in catalogues and a brief allusion to it in the local guide-book can be called immortality, that so delighted me, but a quite whimsical MS. account of a progress through Wales of the Duke of Beaufort as President of the Marches, illustrated by the author and not long ago printed to the extent of a few copies. Thomas Dinely went in the suite of the duke, and with engaging *naïveté* and a great deal of unconscious humour—for he was himself an anti-

quarian—describes for us the enthusiastic loyalty and hospitality of the South and West Walians, and the touching reverence they entertained for the august person of his own patron the duke. He tells us how the gutters of Carmarthen ran claret, how the dying embers of the bonfires in the streets were rekindled in the small hours by the cloaks and hats and canes flung on them by enthusiastic and over-merry revellers. He tells us how excellent was the claret of the Cardiganshire squires, and how admirably they mixed punch, and a great many other things that illuminate a country at a period when we know very little of it, except through the medium of Nonconformist biographies and autobiographies, which relate how the souls of the once light-hearted and frivolous Welshmen were saved, and the common people gradually prepared for the extraordinary change that has come over them. The expedition started from Worcester, and Thomas Dinely of Charlton, in Cropthorne, as a Worcestershire man, was within the jurisdiction of Wales and the Marches, which was then almost at its close, and I think he was a minor official of the Ludlow court. It is singular how rarely the lights of Shakespearean topography, searching after the minutest contemporary facts and details, seem to realize or at least to vouchsafe their readers the information that Shakespeare lived within three miles of the jurisdiction of the President of Wales and the Marches. In his day, too, it was much more of a reality than in Thomas Dinely's. Worcestershire, to be sure, by no means relished its inclusion and constantly petitioned against it, though it had the great saving merit of sparing a litigant the expense of a journey to London, for Ludlow was but a step. With the Stuarts it came to be an engine of oppression and was known as the Star Chamber of

Wales. "From Ludlow and the Court of the Marches, good Lord deliver us" was an invocation frequently pronounced on the banks of the Severn and Avon. More old friends rose to mind as I gazed upon these silent groups of prolific Dinelys (or Dingleys). For with all their fertility they were reduced to a solitary girl by about 1740, who carried away the property to one Edward Goodere (or Goodyear)—so little did they care for a few odd letters—of Burghope, a rather eccentric and choleric knight of Herefordshire. But his choler and peculiarities are of purely local and Herefordian significance, so I must not drag them in. But his sons, Dinelys in the female line, made England ring, even in the absence of halfpenny newspapers, with a tragedy in high life. For the Squire of Burghope was a childless man, and his brother (or cousin), who commanded a ship of war, H.M.S. "Ruby", was his next heir. It was when the "Ruby" lay in Bristol that its captain saw his opportunity. For, inviting his brother on board, he nefariously made away with him. It was clumsily done, with the aid of accomplices who gave their employer away, and he was hung at Bristol. So ended, I think, a line who came originally, so one of the monuments at Cropthorne tells us, of noble origin in the north, probably Cheshire, and were men of action, if not always of great actions, to the bitter end.

Charlton, their old abode, is on the same side of the river and beyond the church. Samuel Foote, the celebrated comedian, seems to have been in some sort heir to the ill-fated Dinely brothers as regards the Charlton estate, and to have come down there and made a great splash for about a year, a coach and six being among the trifling incidentals of his entourage. He was widely connected in and about Worcester and educated at the King's School. A story runs, apropos

of his lavish tendencies, that during a visit of his old schoolmaster to Charlton, Foote presented him with a costly piece of plate off his sideboard. The reverend pedagogue, taken somewhat aback and seeing for a moment the old pupil in the host, blurted out, "And pray, sir, what did all these fine things cost you?" "Indeed, sir," was the ready answer, "I know not what they cost, but I shall very soon know what they will sell for." Being founders' kin the young Foote had gone as a scholar to Worcester College, Oxford—a foundation intimately associated, as its name implies, with this county. The college and the born comedian, however, wearied of one another in a year or two, when he repaired to Bath and there played cards and lived with a bravery that suited his genius better than his purse. Nash, the county historian, was at school with Foote and speaks with admiration of the inimitable manner in which as a boy he took off the worthies of Worcester at whose houses he visited, and how he declaimed the satires of Horace in schoolhours with such humour as to keep boys and masters alike in loud, uncontrollable laughter.

An iron bridge carries the road across the Avon beyond Cropthorne, and in a mile or so lands the wanderer at Fladbury, a place of pleasant reputation and one which the eye of merry tripper and reflective solitary alike are glad to rest upon; a place of brimming glassy waters, on which the shadow of overhanging foliage quivers in the wake of the gliding boat; a scene of terraced lawns and mellow sunny walls beyond; of a mill, a tumbling lasher and a rope-ferry, perhaps the most complete example of the many delectable riverside studies, to put it from a canvas point of view, of the type in which the Avon excels. Crowning the summit of its terraced lawns, that dip

to the river, is one of the finest rectories in England, of Queen Anne exterior but older date. On the plateau behind, a pleasant village straggles intermittently round a green, along one side of which, behind a fringe of limes, stretches the yard and precincts of an ample fifteenth century church. Part of the massive embattled tower is Norman, but the nave, aisles, and chancel are of the Perpendicular period recently restored. Among the ancient monuments within is a fine altar tomb of polished Purbeck marble, with brass effigies, to John Throckmorton, sub-treasurer of England, 1445, and his wife. The family got their name, famous always in Worcestershire and West Warwickshire, from Throckmorton, now a chapelrie of this parish. Here still stands a considerable portion of their ancient brick and timber manor house, for some time a farm, but still in the hands of the Throckmorton family. There are several flat brasses of about the same date in Fladbury Church, and some old tiles of the sixteenth century; while in two or three windows are the arms of various notabilities who fought in the battle of Evesham—Montfort, Despenser, Mortimer, and others.

The excellent Symonds, who accompanied the king in the Civil War and left such a chatty and informing itinerary, notices these as having been in part smashed by Waller's men a fortnight before. Most interesting perhaps of all is the half-length effigy, placed high up against the wall under a canopy, of Lloyd, bishop successively of St. Asaph, Lichfield, and Worcester, interesting if only for the fact of his having been one of the Seven Bishops who defied James II, and were sent to the Tower for it. He died at Hartlebury Palace, where I have seen an excellent portrait of him, at ninety odd, and, though an author of many books, it

was rather perhaps the many various political and religious phases he had to figure in that gives him chief importance. A man who began to be a bishop in the reign of Charles II, and was still a bishop, active at least in disputation, under George I, must have been weather-beaten as few prelates in history by the storms and changes of the ecclesiastical atmosphere. At one time we find him accused of encouraging the Church of Rome, though vigorously defended by Evelyn, who never heard, he declared, more orthodox and Christian discourses. At another he is extolled for his forbearance towards Dissenters. He was the only one of the Seven Bishops who made friends with William III. He would have none of Dr. Sacheverell, and removed the Worcester bell-ropes lest the mob should ring them as that clerical humbug passed through to his Shropshire living, and to deserved obscurity, for which the mob broke his windows. He was a pious, learned, amiable and charitable man, with a good stout heart. And he may be forgiven if in his ninetieth year he launched into prophecy, foretelling to the queen, out of the Book of Revelation, that a great religious war was due in four years, in which the King of France would be a Protestant champion and the Pope of Rome destroyed. Swift, in relating this, calls him an old fool and affirms that he waxed quarrelsome.

Most of us can remember octogenarian Evangelicals who, in the security of their own approaching end, terrified one in youth with much worse forecasts than this, which was fantastically and optimistically comforting and Protestant. When the bishop was a young tutor at Wadham he had perpetrated a practical joke of a theological kind on the dons, so audacious that he had "to abscond" for a time. Perhaps in the fullness of years the old Adam, as is notoriously likely,

broke out again and he tried his hand on royalty. At any rate, he was a famous man, made more so by the length of time he remained upon a shifting stage; and his dust reposes at Fladbury, not the least of its many associations. Another is the encampment here of a wing of King Charles's army during his occupation of Evesham in 1644, and, according to Symonds, who certainly ought to know, the presence of the king himself. One of the better known of the smaller religious houses, a cell to Worcester, dating back to Saxon times, accounts for Fladbury, and was in short its *fons et origo*. Here, about 1600, resided William Sandys, who expended a sum equal to £100,000 of our money in making the Avon navigable for vessels of fifty tons from Tewkesbury to Stratford, an enterprise which enabled the people of the vale, we are told, to get cheap coal. Evesham, four miles up, is now the head of navigation, which upon any scale of this kind is wholly represented by the small steamers that in summer-time carry local holiday-makers or Birmingham trippers, on enjoyable if protracted pilgrimages, through those many locks that, for aught I know, we owe to the enterprise of William Sandys.

There must have been a former rectory on the scale of this one, for Symonds even in his day speaks of Fladbury rectory as a "fine, large, old, and statelie parsonage," and then proceeds to admire the "parson's wife — a young woman — so far from pride, often carrying the milk payle on her head in the street". An acquaintance, who is a final authority on everything concerned with Worcestershire, related to me how a member of his own family in times past was the unintentional perpetrator of a terrible practical joke on the owners at that time of the advowson of Fladbury, still a good living as things are now, but

then a great prize. The young man in question being, as was supposed, in a rapid decline, with perhaps a year of life left in him, was inducted as a stopgap, pending the full qualification of the patron's young relative or friend. But the dying man, to the dismay of the other parties, the rightful owners, as *de facto* they were, came back to life and strength under the mild and balmy air of Fladbury. And not only that, but he enjoyed the emoluments and dignities of a rector of Fladbury for fifty long years, outliving everybody interested in his death. Between Fladbury and Evesham, for the whole four miles, the Avon keeps a good width and even tide, admirable for boating, and runs picturesquely at the distance of a field or two along the foot of the high wooded ridges attached to Wood-Norton, the seat of the Duke of Orleans, the present King of France, according to Legitimist faith.

Chadbury Lock, where the river tumbles over a sloping weir and ripples in broad shallow and pool towards a water-mill, marks another of many like pictures on the Avon. The river continues to keep its breadth and steady flow as it swerves out from beneath the leafy slopes of Wood-Norton, and passing under Vineyard Hill, and by Bengeworth Ferry and Hampton Church, sweeps round the long ridge upon which Evesham is so conspicuously planted.

CHAPTER IV

BELOW THE COTSWOLDS

THOUGH the Avon proper takes the long circuit round Bredon Hill, the latter, though posing, and very beautifully so for a time, as its eastern wall, is really but an isolated hump rising in the middle of the broader vale of Cotswold. But for Bredon the Avon valley might be described as a shallow depression hugging the Worcestershire or northern escarpment of this much wider vale that lies between the steep Cotswold slopes and the walls of the central plateau of Worcestershire which the Avon actually washes. This broad vale from Tewkesbury to Evesham, seven or eight miles in width, and this lower stage of it nearly twice as long, is all in fact the Avon valley, and none the less so because the river clings to the farther edge instead of taking what looks from any eminence its more natural course down the middle. The road from Tewkesbury to Evesham very naturally adopts this latter plan, while the few trifling brooks that come down out of the Cotswolds, heading north-west for the main river, seem to despair of finding it after a time, and turn sharply to the east or west for Tewkesbury or Evesham. But, as the traveller between the two old abbey towns takes what is both the modern and the ancient route, he leaves the Avon without even a passing glimpse of it at Tewkesbury, and in due

course has the whole of Bredon Hill between himself and it. Where precisely the vale of Evesham terminates, if at all: or by how many people, if any, part of this clearly defined compact wedge of country is called the vale of Cotswold, we need not pause to inquire. The whole area between the Avon and the Cotswold is one country and one people, pursuing the same industries, belonging to the same stock, elbowing one another in highway and market, talking the same dialect with the same inflection, and all alike looking to the top of Bredon Hill for indications of that weather, fair or foul, which concerns them all so vitally. Probably from time immemorial they shared the same characteristics of blood and race—Cornivii in British, Hwicci in Saxon times—later on as ordinary Englishmen, sharing the distinction of being neither Borderers nor Midlanders. So far, however, nothing could be simpler, nor could a more homogeneous people, living in a fat and happy and beautiful valley, be encountered. And all this in spite of county delimitations of an absolutely distracting kind. I suppose that the natives between Stratford and Tewkesbury know whether their particular parish is in Worcester, Gloucester, or Warwick, since this little matter goes back very likely to the time of Alfred; while proclamations upon church doors and police stations, to say nothing of general and other elections, doubtless serve to keep them in mind of it. But I would strongly recommend the intelligent stranger, who is out to enjoy himself, not to worry here about county boundaries. Possibly, he would not do so in any case, but some people have a fancy for keeping track of what county they are in, and a kind of superstitious though worthy reverence for the hedge or road or hill that divides

historic shires. I have it strongly myself, but here I soon gave it up, and the more readily, as one can see at a glance how little significance such landmarks have. Nowhere in England, as the first glance at a map will reveal, are there such ragged edges or such hopeless confusion as along the border of Worcester and Gloucester and the western edge of Warwickshire. It is not only the wedges and loops that the counties alternately drive into one another's vitals, but a perfect archipelago of Worcestershire islands float about in the other two shires. How it comes about that in these days, when the county has become like others a unit of rural organization, that such vagaries have not been attended to I cannot imagine. The County Council steam-roller must puff laboriously over miles of alien highway to get to its outlying colonies. The parliamentary candidate and the election agent following the same weary course, one would think might be instructive object-lessons for reform. I do not know whether the inhabitants of these outlying islands, which have or had lately their counterparts elsewhere, are extra patriotic in the matter of province, like the people of Guernsey and Jersey, for instance. Worcestershire is a notorious colonizer. It owns quite an extensive island in Staffordshire, of which Dudley is the capital. Till lately it flung thumb and fingers over the Malvern Hills, that stupendous racial barrier, into the lowlands of Herefordshire, but they have recently, I believe, been snipped off. These mutual raids begin at Tewkesbury. Gloucester makes a flagrant jump far over Nature's boundary at the mouth of the Avon, and may be said first to provoke the mutual aggression that goes on all along the line, of which, however, we will say nothing more and take no account of, as humanity

here, if not county boundaries, has for ages been at one.

And in view of this, what of the dialect? And what, in truth, is much more than dialect—for mere archaic words are common to groups of counties—intonation and pronunciation. But, grouping all three under the accepted designation, an ear for dialect, like an ear for music, is in a sense born. It is neither so useful, nor so ornamental, nor at the same time so general as the latter. Nevertheless it is a great comfort in life and especially so to the individual thus endowed who has a turn for cultivating it, though it has nothing to do with music and implies no gift of tongues in the accepted sense of the term. As regards the former, most of the famous singers I have heard, who delight one with ballads in a vernacular not their own, are conspicuously wanting in this particular form of ear. Most of the educated men or women I have known who have this sense and expression of vernacular strong within them, are neither musicians nor linguists in any appreciable degree, but have of necessity the saving sense of humour even when archæologists, which a few of them are. Some are only past-masters in the vanishing rustic dialect of their own district. Others, from greater opportunity perhaps, are keenly alive to, and often apt in all forms of dialect that they encounter in a wider life. A great majority of people, however, are practically deaf and dumb to anything of the kind, and only conscious of its more aggressive or, to them, incoherent forms. To so modest a predilection one may freely confess without breach of taste or charge of egotism, and from a tender age the vernacular has been to me a frequent source of comfort, interest, and enjoyment. I have been also somewhat blessed in opportunity on both sides of the Atlantic. For the

language of the country people in the old States of America is intimately linked with that of our own.

But never had it been given me to know anything at all of the spoken tongue of the people who inhabit the country between Stratford and Gloucester, to indicate thus roughly a region that would have to be much extended and elaborated in a dialect map. Testimony of a singularly convincing nature to its peculiar note was afforded me, and in so curious a fashion that I shall venture the interpolation. Now long ago, but for many years, and several times a year, it fell to me to meet a particular individual hailing from these parts. He was of a type, it so happened, removed above suspicion of any vulgar tongue. Nor had he any, but only a peculiar lilt and pitch of voice at the end of his sentences which became, so far as I was concerned, a feature quite inseparable from his personality—a mere individual trick or habit I took it for. Our intercourse had ceased for years and I had practically forgotten all about him.

The speech beyond the Severn, and that again on the nether side of the Cotswolds, were both familiar to me of old. But when I came down for the first time to Tewkesbury, and into contact with the remote descendants of the Hwicci living up and down the Avon and Severn valley, my whilom friend leaped out of the past, out of the grave, for all I know, to greet me in every shop and farmhouse, in every inn-parlour. He discoursed with me at country stations in the uniform of a porter or a station-master, he opened church doors for me in the garb of a sexton, and even as a stone-breaker discussed old-age pensions or more immediately pertinent matters by the roadside. That is to say, they all alike rendered the two final syllables of every sentence as he rendered

them, and in a fashion that at the uttermost end of the earth I now understand would proclaim the native of the vale of Evesham and the Severn side. For example, " 'Ee zed 'ee wur goin' to Chelt'ham. I don't know as 'ee ought to ". The first syllable of Cheltenham would drop about two notes below the normal sound of the rest of the sentence, and the last syllable rise one above it. The same would occur in " ought to ".

This is the distinguishing characteristic of the speech between Evesham and Cheltenham, and a good deal more besides. You cannot, unfortunately, put a county to it, since it is shared by portions of three counties—one might almost say of four. For though weakening greatly as you approach Stratford and the Warwickshire speech, I have heard it distinctly on the tongues of natives of the western fringe of that county. On crossing the Severn it overlaps a trifle into Herefordshire, where it soon, however, gives way to the true Border-Welsh sing-song which distinguishes that county in different degrees. As a matter of fact, the intonation in question is the first faint sign of the Welsh lilt ; at any rate, the two final notes are nothing more than the familiar Welsh accentuation coming suddenly and unexpectedly at the end of a stolid Saxon monotone, otherwise we have here the ordinary South Saxon tongue burring softly on the "r's", buzzing slightly on the "s's", and gloriously "aitchless" ; that tongue which with variations comes up from Sussex, leaving the direful ever-encroaching Cockney belt upon the right, through Hants, Berks, and Wilts, where it is broadest, and thence through Gloucestershire across the Cotswolds, not sensibly altering till on the farther side of these hills it suddenly achieves the two eccentric final notes which stamp it and have almost the Welsh

ring. I do not profess to have beaten the bounds of this vernacular, and if I had, very few readers would thank me for an itinerary of the same. I did not find it noticeable along the top of the Cotswolds above this Avon valley, but towards Cheltenham it must surely climb the hills? It was interesting, as I said before, to note it die away up the Avon valley into the ordinary Warwickshire dialect, another and less attractive speech altogether. I have amused myself, too, while in central and northern Worcestershire, by the mingling of this tongue with the harder "Midland" that runs a long way into the county for both natural and artificial reasons. But down here, at any rate, between Tewkesbury and Evesham, this unmistakable and uncatalogued dialect is in full possession of the field. If Shakespeare did not speak it, he was at any rate within four or five miles of many who did, and among them were doubtless some of his relations and many of his friends.

For, some miles up from Tewkesbury, one is conscious of being on the ancient bed of the Severn, that lagoon-like estuary, which probably, when the Romans came, clave the country up to Worcester and Bewdley. But in this level stretch of grain and grass, hedgerow and orchard, radiant in the dress of high summer and a warm and fertile soil, there is in truth no touch of monotony. On the contrary, it the better serves to display the hills and ranges which group themselves upon the far or near horizon, since here for a while you may still look round the south-western corner of the Cotswolds, and down the long wide plain of the Severn, into which the high downs with their sharp quarried summits dip in successive spurs as some lofty but not precipitous coast-line droops to the sea. Finger-posts mark the road to Cheltenham, and the distance is

eight miles: and southward along the glowing plain, which from the level suggests an almost unbroken stretch of woodland; with a church tower or spire shooting up here and there, you can almost see that pleasant haunt of leisurely middle age and vigorous youth.

Dim across the Severn are the blue hills of Monmouth. But behind, like a range of mountains that have wandered out of Wales, are the eight peaks of the Malverns. And this fancy comes more especially when there is a haze in the air, or when the sun has dropped behind them, or again in the murk of winter storms, above all, perhaps, when clad with snow. At all times beautiful, in bright clear weather, when this mystic cloak is off them they become too lavish of detail and display their really gentle qualities, their green slopes and folding combes. Those three thousand feet or so of veiled crag and rugged steep that the Malverns can so effectively impose upon one's vision become merely beautiful and quite hospitable-looking hills of half the height, with Cheltenham's rival gleaming faintly in white terraces well up their slopes and braving the fullest terrors of that east wind from which the Cotswolds shelter Cheltenham. About four miles from Tewkesbury, at a parting of many ways, stands an eccentric finger-post of seventeenth century date, known as Teddington Hands. The full information to travellers inscribed upon it is no doubt of more recent editing and in line with the County Council finger-posts which are creditably in evidence in a country which just here is rather a network of roads. Outliers of the Cotswolds begin to crop up inconsequently like lesser Bredons, Oxenton on the right, and Dumbleton farther on, each shooting straight up to the height of seven or eight hundred feet. Oxenton

at least is that, well shaped and partly wooded with a church and village nestling at its foot.

I do not propose to carry the reader in this chapter along the main road to Evesham, as there is nothing of particular note for the next few miles but a continual study at fairly close quarters of the long south-eastern face of Bredon Hill, of which no doubt I shall be thought to have already said quite enough. But at Teddington Hands a road branches away to Winchcomb at the foot of the Cotswolds, and from thence Evesham may be reached by a choice of roads. Now Winchcomb is a Cotswold town architecturally, and should not be missed by any one traversing the Avon valley, particularly if he cannot make the opportunity to penetrate to Chipping Camden, the other town of this type on this side of the range, and indeed a much finer one. But close to Winchcomb is Sudely, and Sudely is worth an effort to reach: first, because it is a beautiful old house and spot; secondly, for its connexion with Katherine Parr, the surviving wife of Henry VIII, who died and lies buried there; and thirdly, for its association with Charles I and the Civil War.

It is some half-dozen miles from Teddington Hands to Winchcomb, and in early July, at least, if there is nothing definite to give one pause by the way, there is much that is pleasing to beguile it. The clover and ryegrass are already shorn stubbles, but the horse-mower is rattling through the meadow hay, while the swathes of yesterday look almost white against the opulent foliage of the huge elms which in this country so commonly both line the highway and divide the fields. The wheat and barley, too, are just beginning to wave their green heads dubiously, one might well think, with the recollection of the

futile years behind and the perhaps more hopeful ones to come.

However, there is sufficient grain still grown even in the West Midlands to give the landscape those effective touches we look for in harvest-time and autumn. At Teddington Hands, too, where one swerves away to Winchcomb and the Cotswold foot, one has scarcely entered the true garden district of the vale of Evesham, though nigh upon the verge of it. By the roadside a diminutive, long-deserted church, standing in an orchard, once served the villages of the two Washbournes which lie over towards the foot of Dumbleton Hill. This Gloucestershire village, for we are now for the moment in that county, was the origin of a well-known old Worcestershire family of that name and of Wickenford near Worcester. As Worcestershire squires, at any rate, they are long extinct, but a branch of them went to America, where they still flourish on several stems; so much so, I think, that the ear of my American pilgrim who explores this delectable vale at leisure—if any such escape from the tyranny of convention—would be caught by it. There are many tombs of the Washbournes in Wickenford church. One of them commemorates the most worthy perhaps of them all, John Washbourne, who died in 1632. Habington, the first county historian, who knew him personally, styles him "the most contynual housekeeper and the best loved gentleman in the county." He was on the Commission of the Peace for sixty years. His grandson, Colonel John Washbourne, was a prominent Loyalist, and heavily fined after the war; but he managed, it is said, to get even with the sequestrators by paying them in base coin.

Passing Stanley Pontlarge and Gretton, some

semi-detached flankers of the Cotswolds, seven or eight hundred feet in height, stand out near by upon the right, and Winchcomb upon the toes of the main ridge is partly enfolded in a pretty confusion of green hill and wooded combe. Though not immediately concerned with us here, I should like to note, for the benefit of the alien, how striking is the road from here to Cheltenham, mounting, as it does, the great shoulder of Cleeve Hill—a mile and a half push, by the way, for the cyclist,—but offering full compensation for the toil in the magnificent prospect unfolded from the summit, down the Severn valley.

Winchcomb, as already noted, is a Cotswold town. Just as, coming up from the flint or half-timbered thatched-roofed villages of south and mid Wilts, one encounters the solid stone villages of north-west Wilts and Gloucester on the southern side of the Cotswolds, so here, from the black and white of the west Midland belt, one runs suddenly on the northern slope of the same range into wholly another architectural atmosphere. The facility with which it can be quarried and fashioned for use, together with the durability and hardness which it assumes afterwards, makes this an ideal building stone, while the warm, greyish brown mellow tint, with which time so speedily endows it, satisfies that other, æsthetic sense, to an uncommon degree. A Cotswold house not a century old combines an air of the gravest antiquity with one of unquestioned solidity and cheerful comfort. A Northumbrian cottage of whinstone, built two hundred years ago, very often looks precisely like its neighbour built the day before yesterday, an achievement creditable perhaps, but not æsthetic. This great susceptibility to treatment, coupled with the abundance of supply, seems to

raise the standard both in comfort and design of buildings of every degree throughout the Cotswold country. The long, narrow street trailing up to the slope on the top of which the fine church of Winchcomb stands, with its many low stone houses, is not comparable in distinction with many of the Cotswold towns. It is characteristic, however, and interesting, while the "Seymour Arms", the principal house of call, in the High Street, is a fine specimen of sixteenth century work.

At the head of the main street is an open space fringed with the sort of houses you expect to see in every little country town, standing somewhat aloof from its madding crowd, but near enough to keep professional touch of its needs. Here is the site of the ancient priory of which a fine old Tudor building fronting the road looks almost as if it might be a relic, but is actually an almshouse erected a little later, while close to it is a noble Perpendicular church, finely displayed in an expansive and well-ordered graveyard. When I discovered on my visit that the custodian of the building, the key-bearer and cicerone, was of the gentler sex, I felt that a faint shadow had fallen upon the coming treat. I like the male sexton of the little country church, when he is in evidence, not for his historical contributions to my acquaintance with his church, which are usually slight or fantastic, but for what he often is, and for his stimulating converse on matters general. He always wears, moreover, a pleasant air of indifference to the flight of time, which is precisely the state of mind you should be in yourself to properly enjoy a country church and all that is therein, visible and invisible. But the lady is apt to know less about the church even than the other, howsoever conscientiously

she may scrub it, and has seldom anything to say worth hearing upon other subjects. She is also more practical and in a greater hurry. Here, however, at Winchcomb was an anomaly in the guise of a female antiquarian born to the profession, I was given to understand; for the office, I have a vague notion, was hereditary and had thus devolved upon a lady who filled it worthily. For Winchcomb church is a stately building, not one in which the entertaining discourse of a garrulous gravedigger would be in order.

Sudely Castle is but a mile away, and as you enter the grounds, through an embattled gateway—modern, I fear—the large, low square peeps engagingly over the finely timbered lawns. And close by, in the garden, stands the little church, once the castle chapel, where rests at last the much-tortured dust of Katherine Parr. Sudely, originally a Norman fortress, was rebuilt by Ralph de Botelar, a Lancastrian, about the period of the battle of Tewkesbury. A sea-going baron was he, chief admiral against the French, and said to have built much of Sudely Castle out of the ransom paid him by a captured admiral of that nation. Edward IV bought it, as is hinted, at his own price, after which it remained with the Crown till it becomes interesting as the property of another high admiral, Thomas, Lord Seymour, brother of the Protector Somerset. It had been granted him by his brother, the Duke of Somerset as regent, an equivocal proceeding which would quite possibly have been cancelled had the young King Edward lived to manhood. However, Thomas Seymour, Lord Sudely, had in 1547 married Katherine Parr with somewhat indecorous haste after the king's death. This handsome, ambitious, and unprincipled person had indeed been her accepted husband when Henry the Eighth

practically snatched her from his arms. The admirable Katherine only just saved her neck from the axe of her gouty irascible spouse, though she humoured him with great patience and tact. If he had lived another few months, it is more than probable he would have been persuaded—for the initiative in this case at least was not his—to have sealed his reputation as a Bluebeard without hope of an apologist in future ages. A Bill of Attainder was actually drawn out by the ecclesiastics hostile to the queen, and while the coarse old reprobate was blowing hot and cold, with interludes of affection and an open ear to the flatterers and tempters, he fortunately died. Katherine, now thirty-four years of age, married Seymour with almost indecent dispatch. She was the natural guardian both of the Princess Elizabeth and the Lady Jane Grey, and for her brief year of married life is said to have suffered no little from the over familiar rompings of her undisciplined husband with the young girl, that in truth caused some little scandal. But what concerns us here, is that when Katherine, after three childless marriages, came down to Sudely some weeks before the birth of the infant that caused her death, Lady Jane Grey came with her. She had a retinue that would have done credit to her previous condition of queen, no less than a hundred and twenty gentlemen to her household, a fact which illustrates how much greater were the openings for younger sons in the sixteenth than in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. She had ladies-in-waiting, maids of honour, and gentlewomen-in-ordinary, and, above all, a goodly collection of divines of the Reformed Church, her own persuasion, though it had nearly cost her her life as the wife of the great Protestant champion, so utterly agog were such things at a period extolled

by so many pious and ingenuous souls. This necessitated services twice a day or oftener, no doubt, to give all the preachers a chance, at which her worldly husband absolutely refused to put in an appearance, and proved himself altogether "a great let and hindrance." But neither the splendour of her household nor the intercessions of the ministers availed poor Katherine aught, for seven days after her child was born she died. The whole thing is one of the most curious domestic dramas in English history. The momentarily distracted widower of Sudely soon turned his ambitions to supplanting his great brother, who, playing the ordinary game of the period, soon laid the younger by the heels and had his head off. The girl-child, through some technical failure in will-making on Katherine's part, was left a pauper and bandied about among heartless relatives till she was married, as is credibly thought, to a Kentish squire named Bushell. But Katherine's funeral at Sudely was magnificent, with the Lady Jane Grey, who had been with her there all the time, as chief mourner. It was celebrated indeed with almost royal splendour, and was, says Miss Strickland, the first royal funeral in England observed with the Anglican ritual. But the speedy fate of the husband, the pitiful story of the child, of which her ultimate marriage, though the least certain, is the best part, the decay of the splendid mansion, is capped by the gruesome tale, though a much later one, that relates to the corpse of the beautiful and accomplished queen. She was originally interred on the north side of the altar in the then beautiful chapel at Sudely, and a mural tablet of sculptured alabaster erected above her grave. In course of time the castle fell into ruins, and the chapel with it.

According to Rudde's history of Gloucestershire, in the year 1782, some ladies staying at Sudely, the habitable part of which was then used either as an inn or a farmhouse, noticed in the ruined roofless chapel a block of alabaster on the north wall, and suspecting it to be the back of a vanished monument, had the ground opened below it. There was discovered near the surface a leaden envelope which they opened in two places and found to enclose a human body wrapped in cerecloth. In lifting the latter from the face, they found the features, particularly the eyes, in a perfect state of preservation. Their quest had so far exceeded their expectations that, frightened at the sight and at the smell (of spices) which came from the cerecloth, they only allowed themselves time to read the inscription on the coffin, which proclaimed it to be that of Queen Katherine, and ordered the earth to be hastily thrown upon the grave. In the same summer, the tenant of the land again removed the earth from the coffin, which lay two feet below the surface, and disclosed the full inscription. He opened part of the coffin, and found the body, which was wrapped in six or seven linen cerecloths, absolutely uncorrupted, though it had lain there for two hundred and fifty years. The flesh of the arm which he examined was white and moist.

These investigations were done decently and in order, but two years later some rude hands, probably treasure-hunting, dragged the body from the tomb and threw it on to a heap of rubbish, where it lay exposed to the public gaze. A credible witness, who was present at the time, relates that the remains of costly clothing, not a shroud, were still on Katherine's body, and shoes on her feet, which were extremely small, and all her proportions very delicate, and that

traces of beauty were still perceptible in the face, though under such treatment decay rapidly set in. The parson, however, put in a tardy interference and caused the body to be reinterred. The incident, by this time, had got about and aroused curiosity, and the unfortunate queen was not even now allowed to rest in peace. For in 1786 the Reverend Treadway, archæologist and historian of Worcestershire, made an authorized investigation, the result of which may be read in volume nine of the "Archæologia". It is enough to say here that by this time the face had decayed, but the body was perfect, the hand and nails entire and of a brownish colour. Miss Strickland, who saw a lock of Katherine's hair, clipped off on one of these occasions, describes it as of exquisite quality, like threads of burnished gold, with an inclination to curl naturally. The chapel being then a ruin, the rector, in 1817, with a view to prevent further desecration, had the remains reburied in what a visitor of that day describes as "a lean-to building against the chapel, where service is sometimes performed".

Sudely, which had fallen to the Chandos family, was held as an important Royalist post for most of the Civil War, and the sixth Lord Chandos, its owner, was an active soldier on the king's side. On New Year's Day, 1643, the castle, then held by only a captain and sixty men, was attacked by the resolute Massey from Gloucester with an overwhelming force and taken, but soon abandoned, before the virtual predominance which the king soon acquired in the west country. It was for a long time of great importance as commanding the route of the Parliamentarians to Gloucester, their only hold on the west. Nearly two years later, during that retreat of the king from Oxford which Pershore Bridge brought home to us, Waller,

and Massey who was still at Gloucester, met at Sudely and captured it with a number of officers and great spoil. The property was redeemed by Lord Chandos with a fine of £5000, but the damage done to chapel, family tombs, and castle by the Parliamentary troops, for whom every sign of grace, beauty, or elegance was anathema, was irreparable and the whole place was abandoned to the bats and owls ; or, to be literal, all but such part as served to shelter a farmer and a publican successively.

About seventy years ago Sudely was purchased by the Dent family, the great Worcester glovers. The north quadrangle was restored with singular success, while a few years later Sir Gilbert Scott did the same for the church upon an elaborate scale, not forgetting a canopied altar tomb and effigy to Queen Katherine. In reverent treatment and sense of the past, Sudely was fortunate in its new owners. The castle is not shown to the public, but it is the exterior that possesses historically the chief interest, and this is accessible enough, as the church so intimately associated with Henry's last queen, and almost touching the house, is of course shown. The grievous story of Katherine's desecrated grave, though little known generally, had been familiar to me for years, originally gleaned in the queen's native country about Kendal ; and to find myself unexpectedly at Sudely, to the very situation of which, beyond the fact of its county, I admit a previous and culpable ignorance, was very stimulating, in spite of the wiping out of the ruined chapel and its complete restoration.

The direct road from Winchcomb to Evesham, for a considerable distance at any rate, is devoid of anything that is likely to remain in the memory or to hold one's fancy. But by taking that which leads to

Broadway along the base of the Cotswolds, one gets on closer terms with the spring of the hills, which are luxuriant rather than wild, pretty interludes of wood and grass enclosures climbing to the summit, and one can easily see where the wandering Bredon gets its characteristics. The suggestion is always present that this high green ridge must be topped by a wild downland of some sort, where turf prevails and trees are not and fences few, and homesteads far apart, with that sort of glamour and atmosphere which belongs to high and solitary regions, such as Salisbury Plain, for instance. But the aspiring wanderer, whether he climb on foot through wood and pasture, or push a cycle for a mile and a half uphill, will be disappointed if he expects to find beyond the brow anything of this kind, strong as are the portents of it. It would not be accurate to say that you climbed seven or eight hundred feet out of the vale of Evesham and continued as before, for they do not make jam up there, nor grow Pershore plums, nor hops, nor outdoor tomatoes by the acre.

The farmers, who know nothing of intensive culture and pursue the usual course of the British agriculturist on a liberal scale, are of a somewhat different breed and habit from the men of the vale. But the uncritical wight will still find himself, when he has mounted the stairway into it, in an enclosed country, with a normal allowance of woodland hedgerow, stone wall, home-steads, finger-posts, hedged-in roads, and ploughland. I resented this myself very much, as in the freshness of my first and hottest week in the country I scaled the wall with a view to a peep into the Cotswolds of which one hears so much. Other portions of the range, no doubt, have the nature of the upland still upon them. But this is of no conse-

quence here and none whatever to the Avon valley, seeing how much it owes from first to last to the outer rampart of this friendly and shapely bank of hills. Following their foot from Winchcomb one soon comes in touch with Hailes Abbey, whose ruins, of little stature now, cover, nevertheless, a large space of ground, with their still surviving foundations, besides part of a tower and cloister, and an ample tithe barn not far away. The situation, close into the foot of the hills, is characteristic of the skill with which the monks usually chose their sites. The Cistercians were responsible for this one, and the necessary funds were contributed in 1246 by Richard, the younger brother of Henry III, on the strength of a vow made while in peril at sea. This was no cell, nor second-rate establishment, like Fladbury and others, but it was dedicated by the Bishop of Worcester, assisted by thirteen other bishops in the presence of Henry III and his queen, supported by three hundred knights and noblemen, and its chief was a mitred abbot.

It is said that the brethren worked a clever and very profitable miracle here by means of a crystal represented as containing some of Christ's blood. The victim was told that if guilty of deadly sin, and consequently unable to see the blood, he was not absolved, but if successful in seeing it he had no cause for anxiety or expenditure. At the closing of the monastery the clever trick was exposed, for the crystal, it appears, had a thick and a thin side, of course not evident to the ordinary eye. Some duck's blood was introduced weekly and the beatific vision was turned off or on at will by the priest in charge. The astuteness of this arrangement as a means of raising money in that guileless period is surely entitled to the fullest admiration. The remains of the abbey are fenced in

and well protected, though as a mere spectacle very little remains. Of the foundations and materials for those interested in archæology there is, however, a great deal, due apparently to the enterprising excavations of the county archæological society.

Two miles beyond, and hugging the leafy slope of the hills, is Stanway, Lord Elcho's seat, which came into the Wemyss family by marriage in times long past. The house is worthy of the situation, and the situation of the house, and more could hardly be said, while the place derives further charm from its entire seclusion from the world. A fine three-storied gateway, built by Inigo Jones, fronts the highway. Immediately within it the mellow face of the fine old Tudor mansion looks peacefully over far-spreading lawns, shaded with magnificent elms and oaks, while in one corner stands the parish church adjoining a perfect specimen of a fifteenth century tithe barn. Above the gables and chimneys of the mansion, which is of no great size for its class, and all the better for it, rise the leafy foothills of the Cotswolds. It is occupied for a portion of the year and is not shown. Nor, in spite of the interest every old house must always have, is it a "show house" as regards the interior in the ordinary sense of the word. I was glad, however, of the opportunity of going through it if only for the vast and magnificent Tudor window in the drawing-room, which is a conspicuous feature from without. Like all old houses continuously inhabited there are later additions. The grounds in the rear run abruptly up the hill-side, from the summit of which descends a rivulet, and among the pictures in the house is a curious one, showing the characteristic use that was made of this stream in the early eighteenth century.

A terrace in the hill-side, now dry, was turned into a small ornamental pool where the "house party" of the day, in that early Georgian garb, always so incongruous to our eye against a rural background, are boating and angling with that quite remarkable satisfaction in elementary and limited pleasures which apparently distinguished the country-house visitor of the period.

The road for some distance after leaving Stanway is fringed on either hand by the stately timber of the park, and one has not long passed out of its shade when the beautiful little hill-foot village of Stanford clasps the highway with a brief succession of varied and most attractive specimens of Cotswold architecture, characteristic in ample fronts and gable ends of yellowish grey stone and in flagged roofs, all of that rich complexion so hopeless of description by any mere paint-box terms. And at the farther end of the village, all exposed to view, with large terraced lawns stretching to the roadside, is Stanford Court, a more actually beautiful house than Stanway. At something of an angle, as seen from the passing road, it displays quite a forest of Tudor gables and chimneys. Two broad wings with wide gables are thrown forward from the front with apparently Queen Anne or Georgian windows of later date, and the central portion, of three stories, terminates in four narrow gables ; the two inner ones, with the walls they surmount recessed yet farther, and the whole lit with stone-mullioned windows, make a beautiful picture, gracefully planted on a verdant carpet and adequately supported and overshadowed on the flanks and rear by stately trees.

We must not pursue the road to Broadway, as we are due there later. A sharp turn to the left out of the village, making a slightly capricious choice among

several twisting ways to Evesham, terminates after three or four miles at Sedgebarrow, which stands on that main road between the two abbey towns, which we forsook for more devious but more alluring ways at an early stage. Of these winding byways, leading from village to village, or sometimes having no apparent motive but to give an alternate route to some neighbouring main road, there is great store. Their fences are not often the object of much solicitude at the hands of the road authorities, and in no country that I have seen are the roadsides more profusely decked with wild flowers. This is natural enough in one that responds so generously to the cultivation of fruit and flowers as to set up a claim, more sensible than most, to be "the garden of England". But in the untrimmed fences, the choked ditches, and the grassy margins of roads beyond the immediate ken of the fruit-grower, there is constant comfort to such eyes as are happily able to find comfort in things so simple and so accessible. While innumerable motors hurtle on their dust-enveloped way along the main road from Stratford to Evesham and from Evesham to Tewkesbury, there are hundreds of miles of unmolested by-ways between the Cotswolds and the Avon and beyond it, where peace nearly always reigns, and the intermittent dust-blizzard has left no mark of its frenzy upon the luxuriant hedgerows. The briar roses by July have begun to scatter their petals before every rude breath of wind. But the honeysuckle and the trailing convolvulus are braiding the motley tangle of thorn and maple, elm and ash, and a half-score of other woods that go to make that beautiful and quite unique contrivance—an English hedgerow, always at its best in the Midlands and West Midlands. But here in the Avon valley, the willow herb with

its waving leafy stem and serried ranks of crimson flowers, called in these parts, for some inscrutable reason, "coddled apples", takes easily first place. Nowhere else have I seen it, whether on river-bank or on highway hedgerows in such continuous profusion. The meadow-sweet, too, is with us, wherever a patch of damp gives it an excuse to flourish, and the loose-strife, the wild vetch, the crane's-foot, the corn-flower, the scabious, the yarrow, and the whole tribe of other hedgerow flowers, common enough and lightly spoken of, but old friends that we should sadly miss, even to the despised cow parsley and the dandelion. One lacks here, to be sure, the ferns and foxgloves of wild Wales and the Border, but the road edges of this gentler region are made for hospitality and for the cherishing of every vagrant seed that drifts its way on the wings of the wind. The flowering elder, which is very abundant in this generous country, seems to be of a more ivory whiteness than common, and again and again in bright sunshine almost to renew at midsummer and later the departed glories of the May and blackthorn.

But at Sedgebarrow, as already noted, we are on a main route again given over, though not so utterly as some of its more easterly stages, to the frenzies of the modern traveller and the whirling tourist on his way to Tewkesbury, Cheltenham, or the Land's End. But there need be no occasion whatever for the explorer of the shy charms of the vale of Evesham, or of Cotswold, or of Avon, whichever you choose to call it, to fall foul of persons whose methods of exploration are of another kind. *De gustibus non est disputandum.*

Sedgebarrow, happily for itself as things have turned out, stands well back from the main road and upon

the Isbourne, a tributary of the Avon, whose infant streams, if indeed they can ever be said to reach maturity, we crossed, with deplorable negligence at Winchcomb. As a matter of fact, it is the same little rivulet that created that early Georgian pond above Stanway Hall, in which gorgeous wights, it may be remembered, angled in the old picture with gorgeous ladies who no doubt were the real quarry. I confess to small enthusiasm for the tributaries of the Avon. You must be a Midlander, and that of a very precious type, or else a first-flighter, with the Quorn or Pytchley, to appreciate a Midland brook, though here and there some effort of man or miller may provide it with redeeming intervals. Its chief mission seems to lie in unobtrusively nourishing the parent river. In summer, at any rate, you will quite possibly pass it unawares, and if not, there is small temptation to linger on the bridge beneath which its attenuated voiceless waters creep.

The village of Sedgebarrow, though not devoid of half-timbered houses, for we are already out of the Cotswold style, is of no particular interest. But the church boasts a good deal, though unknowingly you might well pass it by like the brook. The vicar, an ecclesiologist of some distinction, saved me from this indiscretion, had the chance of committing it been afforded me. A sexagonal tower would, one might imagine, give any one pause who had an elementary eye for a church. But otherwise this one both inside and out is a plain parallelogram. The vicar promised, however, to show me two curiosities at least that had not their like in England. The one proved to be a very singular old screen of two stories, and a mere plain open framework. I have never myself seen anything like it, in a reasonably wide

experience, but the vicar's conviction, as an expert, that it is unique is no doubt worth more than that. The other was a curious stained window in the chancel, depicting a bishop holding in his hand the model of a church,—the very church in which we stood,—of the Decorated style, and completed in the year 1331. I am not sure that the nature of the illustration is without parallel in a country church, but in this case a contemporary document exists describing in full the dedication, and the two facts taken together entitle the window to the exceptional claim its learned vicar makes for it. Sedgebarrow parish, by the way, may almost be called, one of that archipelago of islands with which Worcestershire sprinkles its neighbours, as you might almost throw a stone across the narrow thread which holds it. And so to Evesham, through Worcestershire for most of the way, leaving Hinton, with its rectory embowered in foliage and its Gothic church set on a green knoll upon the left. A dull, flat road henceforth, if the truth must be told, and not unsuited for the race-track it threatens to become, nor much to be grudged as such, if the market-gardeners and the fruit-growers, whose outcries just then were loud and bitter, do not mind. I paused one day at a gate in the road where the carts were loading the produce of a 20-acre field of strawberries, and the overseer was checking the contributions of the fifty or sixty pickers, women mostly, paid by the basket, who came and went. Volumes of dust falling upon ripe strawberries can be pictured in effect without any realistic illustrations of it here. My foreman friend was very eloquent—a consignment had just been smothered. He wanted to know why people from "God knows where" (that mouth-filling limit to concentrated local

scorn) to whom it could not be other than a matter of trifling moment whether they went by his ripening crop at ten or thirty miles an hour, should nearly always approximate to the latter; and why the quality of produce, raised with so much risk, labour, and expenditure, should be thus superfluously blighted by a set of—well, never mind what names he called, there was safety to them, at any rate, in numbers. He was a sporting-looking person, and he put the further postulate of what a chorus of condemnation would be used towards an individual in the hunting-field who pounded about in soft weather on seeds or wheat. Two good reasons at once sprang to mind: the one a little subtle, perhaps, for this honest young farmer, the other obvious to a child. It would not have been much use to point out that the power of distinguishing between seeds and pastures, acquired perhaps laboriously and even unpleasantly by many a hunting-tenant of the shires, was a precious bit of agricultural lore, a kind of sporting hall-mark that it was humiliating to be without. But this measure of interest in agriculture would likely begin and end there. The hunting stockbroker and his lady from Northamptonshire, killing time thuswise in the off-season, would rarely, I am quite certain, extend their solicitude to summer crops in a strange land, though one can hear them shouting, "*Ware seeds*" to a later recruit of the Pytchley with immense authority and all the air of persons brought up on a farm.

But then, as I pointed out to my friend, their amusement would come to an end if they didn't, whereas the amusement of hurtling at twenty-five miles an hour through his strawberries or other growing produce is never likely to be sensibly checked. There is nothing to check it but human sympathy and know-

ledge of country affairs, and the latter qualifications at least cannot be expected of a class, the great and growing majority of whom in this industrial country are out of touch with practical rural life, while as for a kind heart, no one would be fool enough to put dependence on so abstract a virtue. At any rate, I could not suppress the thought that if his welfare depended on the common sense or consideration of the rampaging chauffeur or Cockney amateur, there was a mighty poor show, and I take it he would be a Simple Simon who thought otherwise, motorists being very much like other mortals, mainly bent on their own pleasure, and hustling for all they are worth to get it. Killing wayfarers is risky, but nothing else matters a rap; why should it? *The devil take the hindmost* is written tolerably large over the opening of the twentieth century, and would make an admirable motto with which to head it for the next historian who undertakes to write a "History of Our Own Times".

BELL TOWER, EVESHAM

CHAPTER V

THE LOWER VALE OF EVESHAM

EVESHAM, as stated in a former chapter, is particularly happy in its approach from this left bank of the river. As you cross the modern bridge, successor to an ancient one that saw much service in peace and war, from Bengeworth, a straggling suburb, the old town which grew from an abbey stands well planted on a ridge within the wide horse-shoe formed by the stream. Down the broad, straight course of the Avon, from the bridge towards the woods and upstanding church of Hampton, public spirit has been active in making the most of a river that lends itself readily to the further beautifying of such towns and villages as are washed by its classic streams. From the ridge of the town on one side a pleasant meadow slopes to its banks, where boathouses of some ambition have both a cheerful and a business-like appearance, as is fitting at a point whence really good boating can be enjoyed over many miles of most attractive water. Here, too, the little steamers from Tewkesbury finish their journey and discharge or take on their passengers. On the farther shore, thanks to the generosity of a former citizen, what were once brushy islands, or *aits*, in the local tongue, are now public gardens, which in the course of nearly half a century have become beautifully shaded stretches of lawn that dip their velvety banks into the brimming

stream. Existing prints of the old bridge show it to have been one of the most picturesque on the Avon, with the signs of the destruction and repair wrought in the Civil War obvious upon it. The present one, also of stone, is really handsome and harmonious, for which Evesham may be thankful, having regard to the monstrosities which advertise the scientific progress of the engineer on many a beautiful river.

The particular object, however, which gives a touch of real dignity to the otherwise pleasant view of the town, is the beautiful Tudor bell-tower, the sole relic of that famous abbey which once grouped its many noble buildings on the green-breasted ridge above the river. Here to-day the most recently erected of these stands in conspicuous and stately isolation, and just behind, girt about with elms, are the two old parish churches, set to the stranger's eye in most perplexing juxtaposition. But the good Abbot Lichfield's belfry, barely completed when the crash came, is the real note of Evesham and the just pride of its people, who otherwise fared even worse than their neighbours of Tewkesbury and Pershore at the hand of the iconoclast and the spoliator. As at Pershore and again at Tewkesbury, the precincts stand just outside the western, or rather the south-western, limit of the town and can be regarded from without as a spectacle unto themselves over a foreground of meadow and foliage, or from another point as rising above the gables of the town they gave birth to. No description of an old town from the wanderer's or his reader's point of view is ever quite in order without a brief prologue from old Leland, whose diction and spelling make of themselves what is really and of intention the driest topographical book ever written seem a constant joy if taken in small doses. "The

town of Evesham is meetly large and well builded with tymbre. The market place is fayre and large. There be diverse praty streets in the towne. The market is very celebrated. In the towne is noe hospital or other famous foundation but the late Abbey".

This one of Evesham is no less pleasant to look upon than the other Avon towns above and below. It has been more tried æsthetically from the prosperity occasioned by the rapid development of fruit-growing in recent times and a consequent activity in bricks and mortar, which has not greatly influenced the others. But it has survived the ordeal tolerably well, and still remains a pleasant and sightly little town, good to look upon and cheerful to move about in. A long, narrow, old-fashioned main street drags itself up from the bridge to the top of the plateau where is a spacious market-place, with several old half-timbered houses conspicuous around it, among them the fine detached sixteenth century Booth hall, a double-gabled building with a projecting third story. Beyond the southern end of the market-place rise the churches among their elm trees, marking the entrance to the old abbey precincts, while to the west of this again spreads a large green, around which are various buildings, among them an ancient house noticeable for its Tudor porch. This is the free grammar school chartered by James I, standing on the site of an older one built by the last abbot, Clement Lichfield. The porch indeed belongs to this earlier building and still wears the rather illegible inscription: *Orate pro anima clementis abbas*. But a still more interesting house stands in the corner near the abbey precincts, which was actually the almonry of the abbey and therefore of fifteenth century date. It displays a conspicuous mullioned five-light window without transoms in

the front, and contains within a good deal of interesting Tudor work.

Returning to the heart of the town where Bridge Street, which, among other old houses, exhibits the fine old-fashioned open courtyard of the "Crown Inn", meets the market-place, the High Street runs northward for a considerable distance. If contrasts give character to a town, as they surely do, that exhibited by the narrow dimensions of the older street on the one hand, and the generous proportions of the newer one on the other, should be to the credit of Evesham. For here we have a business highway of almost market-place span and withal bordered pleasantly by trees upon either side. This has a more modern air, and I do not propose to catalogue the old houses that suggest a mellower one, either in this or other streets of Evesham, for a more purposeless proceeding in anything but a guide-book, or one more calculated to alienate the most patient reader I cannot imagine. But there is here a singularly perfect three-storied specimen of the Queen Anne style, known as Dresden House; dignified to a fault, from the wide, well-moulded eaves to the square porch-roof supported by fine flowing brackets of wrought iron. The house has some personal interest too, in having been the abode of one Dr. Baylis, who, getting into trouble with his creditors, went to Dresden and eventually rose to be physician to Frederick the Great.

Evesham, through its abbey origin, acquires its name from a romantic incident known as the "Vision of Eoves". In the year 701 a sow belonging to Egwin, Bishop of Worcester, had gone astray with her litter, and Eoves, one of his swineherds, after vainly ranging the forest, at length discovered the happy family curled up in a thicket by a ruinous cell, which tradition held

to be an old Celtic church. As the immediate dependent of a bishop, Eoves may be presumed to have been properly susceptible to the sacred atmosphere of the spot and immediately saw a vision, which took the form of three beautiful women all singing, the Virgin in the middle, and promptly ran for his life. But when he reported the adventure to his master, the good bishop's curiosity was so aroused that he himself hied to the lonely spot and had precisely the same weird experience as his swineherd. Exalted by the miraculous encounter, Egwin with as little delay as possible founded a Benedictine monastery there, and later on gave up being a bishop to become its first abbot—a sacrifice, if any, by no means so great as a twentieth century reader might be disposed to imagine. Eoves found immortal and unexpected fame in the bad fright he had undergone, for the monastery was solemnly named Eoves-ham. This venture of the bishop's was not unnaturally regarded with a jealous eye in the cathedral circles of Worcester, and men began to torture the good prelate by spreading such scandalous and unfounded stories about him that nothing, he thought, but a journey in person to Rome could avail to clear his character. Determined to wash himself whiter than snow in the eyes of the Church and to leave his traducers no leg to stand upon, he manacled his own together with a lock and key, and having thrown the key into the Avon started for Italy, intimating his full faith that Heaven, when it saw fit, would relieve them of the astounding inconvenience. Heaven, however, took no steps to liberate the good bishop's legs till he contrived by some unrecorded method of progress to reach the Holy City. Here, on purchasing a salmon for his table, when it was cut open, the key to his happy release, and the utter confounding

of his enemies, was found inside it. The Avon fish, in short, had brought the key by sea to meet the bishop on his arrival by land. It will be noted that the story grows in daring as it advances, and culminates in a delightful outrage on ichthyology. The bells of Rome, too, rang of their own accord, and the Pope was so impressed by such a marvellous testimony to Egwin's innocence, that he gave him all sorts of privileges for his monastery and, most valued of all, freedom from the control of the Worcester episcopate.

Here legend ends and history begins, for the reputation of the canonized Egwin was so great that his bones and his shrine amassed wealth for the abbey through the contributions of innumerable pilgrims, while Saxon kings and thegns sought to mitigate their truculent deeds and improve a poor prospect of Paradise by loading it with farms and manors. As time went on, succeeding abbots qualified as saints, and the miracles which had distinguished their lives and been worked by their remains were sedulously proclaimed throughout the Midlands and the west, and made Eoves-ham popular among pilgrims and prosperous above the common among abbeys. Its rivalry with Worcester, further embittered by its grant of release from episcopal jurisdiction, was intense. For Worcester had bred saints in Oswald and Wulfstan second to none, as is well known. The latter, the one great Saxon bishop who retained his power and influence through the Norman Conquest and his own long life, exceeded all the saints of Worcestershire in the opinion of his staff in that culminating act of self-mortifying piety when he celebrated masses for the repose of the soul of a deceased abbot of Evesham. Then of a truth it was thought at Worcester that he had overdone it, and when the liberal-minded cleric

almost immediately was taken with the very disease that had laid his rival low, he began to think so himself, and registered a vow never again to make spiritual intercession for "such men", upon which he got well.

The wealth of Evesham had received a heavy check at the hand of Edward the Confessor, who despoiled the Worcestershire houses of large estates for the benefit of his new foundation at Westminster. It had before this suffered all kinds of vicissitudes short of actual loss of importance, and continued to suffer many more: Danes, fires, wars, quarrels with Worcester, lawsuits over property. At the Norman Conquest, Evesham had a Saxon abbot almost rivalling Wulfstan in the confidence and power bestowed on him by William. But he was a shrewd man of business and got the best of the saintly Wulfstan, even to filching some land from Worcester. Throughout the Middle Ages the Evesham monastery waxed, its wealth increased, while its buildings, enlarged in size and beauty, covered a great area. At one time it had nearly seventy monks and sixty servants. Besides the abbot who sat in Parliament, there were three priors. The powerful Beauchamps had a castle at Bengeworth, just across the river, and the owner of the moment venturing to take liberties with a wall belonging to the monastery, was immediately excommunicated by the abbot who, not finding this a sufficient corrective, proceeded to the more drastic one of destroying the castle itself.

This is merely an instance of the secular power, when driven to exercise it, of the abbots of Evesham. The brethren were of course great gardeners and horticulturists. It is a pleasant tradition among the people of Evesham that the monks were the founders of the industry for which the town and neighbourhood is to-day famous. The dark, rich soil in the immediate

precincts of the vanished abbey is at this moment a bright scene of fruit and flowers, and one may indulge the fancy that in these pleasant retreats of latter-day occupants there are plants and trees that trace their descent to a far-away monkish origin. Vineyard Hill, just across the river, whither Evesham Joes and Jills wend their way by the picturesque rope-ferry at Hampton on summer Sundays, is a memory of the vine culture in which the Records tell us the monks had five men regularly employed. The *collectanea* of Evesham Abbey are full and interesting and sometimes lively reading. It will be enough here to endorse the natural inference that there were good and bad abbots, that some of the good were very good indeed, and some of the bad incredible ill-doers, though the last seem happily to have been great exceptions.

One of them, Abbot Roger, at the opening of the thirteenth century, was both tyrant and libertine, and was apparently thrust into office by the Crown. He stinted the brethren of this great and wealthy house so cruelly that they had to beg their bread through the country, some of them even dying of starvation, while he himself rioted in luxury. He kept them so short of clothes that they had to come to church in rags or stay away, while the abbot went clad in purple and fine linen, and even denied them fires in the coldest weather. Structural repairs were so neglected that leaking roofs in some quarters made devotion impossible. Even the traditional hospitalities of the house were curtailed, and all this, too, that the revenues might be alienated for the private uses of the wicked abbot, who broke every canonical rule, and of his relatives. Worse than all, perhaps, he betrayed the stubbornly maintained independence of the abbey by secretly making terms with its natural enemy the

Bishop of Worcester, and admitting him as visitor and Superior. The bishop made the most of so unexpected an opportunity by at once excommunicating the entire community except the abbot, a proceeding in its secular brutality wholly humorous, in view of the traditional rivalry of Worcester and Evesham. After twenty-three years of this oppression, the brethren were eventually relieved by the courageous energy of their dean, Marleburg, who, under inconceivable difficulties, carried the whole matter personally to the Pope, and ultimately the infamous Abbot Roger was ejected.

Of the many good abbots the last of all, Clement Lichfield, is best remembered to-day for the memorial he has left us. This good man, when the Dissolution burst upon him, had not actually put the finishing touches to the work by which he hoped to complete the architectural glory of his beloved monastery, little thinking it would be the sole survivor of it. Apart from his devotion to the abbey the further merits of Clement Lichfield lay in his stout refusal to be the instrument of handing it over to the secular powers and thereby securing that provision for the future, which compliance with the king's demand alone ensured him. He was in consequence deposed and a young monk instituted for the mere purpose of performing the needful formalities in the melancholy act of surrender, at the price of a pension and a deanery. Long before the Dissolution the king had extorted large sums of money from Evesham, while Wolsey had periodically levied his own private blackmail. It is difficult to realize that the solitary Gothic arch, a few feet high and a few yards to the southward along the crest of the river-slope from the bell-tower, is the only remnant of a mighty cruciform church of

nave, chancel, great central tower, and transepts, which measured from its lady chapel to its west door more than 350 feet. Around it were grouped numerous chantries; in all parts of it were splendid tombs, while beyond rose the cloisters and the numerous buildings of the monastery. Thus, in whole or part, had a group of great and stately buildings looked down for four centuries upon the Avon brimming at the foot of this long grassy slope. For as many centuries before that again, their ruder predecessors, whatever may have been their form, had stood upon the same site, one among the greatest of English abbeys. Freeman tells us how, after the devastating hand of William of Normandy had fallen upon Cheshire and Shropshire as a punishment for insubordination, crowds of starving people from those counties thronged the streets and precincts of Evesham, and how Abbot Egwin fed the hungry, ministered to the dying, and buried the dead. Yet in the sixteenth century the whole glorious fabric, the cathedral-like church with chapels, altars, monuments, cloisters, and monastic buildings, the product of centuries of zealous and skilful labour, was converted into a stone quarry, and in a short space levelled with the ground.

Probably, however, the most dramatic moment in the life of the monastery was when Simon de Montfort, with Henry III as a hostage, lay there for the night preceding the battle of Evesham, and with his nobles and knights attended mass at the high altar, before marching out to what proved for them so disastrous a field. De Montfort was at the moment marching from the Welsh border to unite his forces with those of his son, who lay at Kenilworth. Prince Edward and the Royalist army lay at Worcester, whence they executed a rapid march on Kenilworth, defeated the younger

de Montfort, captured a portion of his forces, and drove him into the castle. Thence, quickly turning, they fell back down the Avon upon Evesham, while another wing of the army which had remained at Worcester pushed up that river from Pershore to a junction with their friends. De Montfort, ignorant of his son's misfortune, was first made cognizant of the serious nature of his position by the evidence of his own eyes on that fateful August morning. For his barber, as tradition has it, took him up to the top of the abbey tower and showed him the gleaming arms and waving standards of his enemy on the top of the long slope above Evesham, where the residential suburb of the town has of late settled itself.

Nor was this all, for the other division had seized the south bank of the Avon behind him, and the bridges of Evesham and Offenham, which were his only channels of retreat. Thus hopelessly outnumbered, the grim old soldier gave leave to any of his nobles who might feel so inclined to steal away before such a dismal prospect. We do not hear how many, if any, flinched from it, but only of those that stayed with the gallant foreigner who had acquired such singular and, one cannot help thinking, slightly adventitious popularity as the champion of English liberties. They went bravely out, at any rate, to meet their doom on the long slope to the north of the town. "May the Lord have mercy on our souls," said de Montfort as he led on his army, "for our bodies are the enemies'". No quarter was asked or given. The unexpected did not happen; de Montfort fought like a lion, but he and all his supporters were killed, wounded, or dispersed. It was then that Henry cried out in the nick of time to a common soldier, who was about to dispatch him, "Stay, I am Henry of Winchester, your king". De Montfort's body

was quartered and the extremities cut off. Such parts as could be collected by the pious monks of Evesham were buried in front of the high altar of the abbey church, and repaid them a hundredfold by the miracles they wrought and by the income they brought to the abbey for generations. One foot, I remember, was carried to Northumberland, where the earl had manors, and proved a valuable asset to the monastery of Alnwick, whose fine old gateway still stands alone in a woody glen by Aln's banks. De Montfort was even greater in the grave than he had been in the camp, and in death was even more popular than in life. Songs were written to his glorious memory and thousands offered their petitions upon his tomb. The place where he and his followers fought and fell is now covered in part by the villas of prosperous Evesham citizens and partly by the private grounds of the present abbey manor.

Within the outer precincts of the vanished abbey is the curious spectacle of a single churchyard containing two churches. The entry from the market-place is through a twelfth century Norman archway, which supports an old half-timbered building with another structure of the same style, and very effectively restored, in close connexion with it. The first of these two churches, that of All Saints, was reserved for the townsfolk, the other, St. Lawrence, for the pilgrims to the abbey. The former is almost wholly of Perpendicular character, though the chancel and north aisle are modern reproductions of it. But the chief object of interest is the Lichfield chantry in the south aisle, the work of that incomparable and pious abbot, last of his line, in praise of whom something was said on a former page. Here, too, his dust reposes beneath an exquisite roof of fan-

vaulting, bearing an escutcheon engraved with the initials C. L. Some well-executed modern windows, too, have been placed in this chantry illustrating scenes from the history of the abbey.

Near at hand, in the same pleasantly shaded churchyard, packed with old gravestones, is the rival church of St. Lawrence, a much more striking building, though none of it is early, the tower and spire being accredited to the fifteenth century, and the rest of a little later date but flavouring throughout of the Tudor period. It is unusually interesting on this account alone and extremely graceful. The panelling in the space between the nave arches and the clerestory is as effective as it is uncommon. The tracery, too, of the vast perpendicular east window is singularly rich. A good deal of the work is attributed to Abbot Lichfield himself, who has also a chantry in the south aisle of this second church, exhibiting even more exquisite fan-tracery in its roof than the one beneath which the creator of both lies buried. Indeed, it is held as unsurpassed of its kind in England. These two churches now represent two distinct parishes, though under a single vicar. As they were not a part of the monastery and were, moreover, needed for public worship, they escaped the general wreck. The beautiful and lofty tower, however, standing at the edge of the churchyard looking down the river-slope, would certainly have gone but for the blackmail, or what amounted to such, that was paid by the townspeople. It was built by Lichfield not merely while dissolution was in the air, but in part while it was actually in progress, and intended both for a belfry and gateway. Over 100 feet high, with buttresses at each angle, carried almost to the base of the open-work battlements, and graceful crocketed pin-

nacles, this tower is a truly beautiful piece of work.

It is fashioned in three stories, each story containing four stages of perpendicular, trefoil-headed arcading. The outer face even of the buttresses displays ornate arcading of similar pattern, while the open battlements are singularly graceful and elaborate. A large ogee-headed, four-light window, with transoms in the middle story, faces the west, with a clock space in the one above. The belfry commands every approach, and, as a last word upon Evesham Abbey, one would like always to recall that view of it from the river where the tower stands out upon the meadowy ridges, the thick elm foliage and the spires of the two parish churches springing in the immediate background.

The abbey, as the originator of the town, so entirely controlled it that in spite of the considerable population, for the period, of 2000 souls, it was governed, till the Dissolution, by two bailiffs under the abbot. But between 1642-46 Evesham was to see more of war and war's alarms than at any previous period, even that of the turbulent Middle Ages. Its situation between Warwick, a consistent Parliament stronghold and region, and Gloucester the important and stoutly held post of that party in their enemies' country, added consequence to such as it already possessed merely by virtue of being within the hottest area of the war. But leading incidents are more to the point here than any involved narrative of its varying fortunes, and the leading incident in the case of Evesham was its capture by assault in May 1645. No more gallant action indeed was fought in the whole war than this one by Massey on the one side, and Colonel Legge upon the other.

The king had passed through Evesham on his way from Oxford to the north-west and carried away with him enough of its garrison to reduce it to 700 men. Massey, that brilliant Parliamentary leader still seated at Gloucester, which he had so gloriously defended and made infinite use of at all times, was bent on the capture of Evesham, as by this means he would cut the line of the king's communications with Oxford. He and his men were also a little nettled at a rebuff they had recently received at Ledbury from the hands of Rupert. So on May 23rd the Parliamentary general left Gloucester with 500 men and a brigade of cavalry. At Tewkesbury, which was for the moment in their hands, he picked up reinforcements, and marching on to Evesham received a further contingent from Warwick, which brought his total force up to 2000 men. From Bengeworth, the suburb on the farther side of the Avon, he sent a summons to the Royalist governor to surrender or expect such justice as fire and sword would administer. Legge, however, in spite of his inferior force and the measure that would be meted out to his garrison and himself in case of failure, defied Massey with laudable courage, and declared himself " nothing terrified at the summons ". His defences were the river, to the extent of its wide horse-shoe bend, while on the unprotected side, which faced the present railroad and, in short, the very slope on which de Montfort had fought his last battle, he had raised an earthen rampart, surmounted with a palisade and further protected by a ditch. Even this, however, was a long line to defend with so small a company. Massey decided to attack the rampart at five points and also the bridge at Bengeworth. Thus prepared he lay throughout the night of the

twenty-fifth. He had no guns and relied upon a direct assault, his men being provided with faggots to throw into the ditch.

Soon after daylight the whole force, thus disposed into separate companies, made a simultaneous dash, Massey, as was his wont, leading the principal division against the most vital point of the works. The men rushed the ditch, climbed the breastwork, and tore down the palisades with which they were defended, and gained the rampart. The intention was to hold this latter until reinforcements could be brought enabling them to break a way into the town. But Legge's musketeers poured in such effective volleys that Massey's men could not face them, and sought shelter under the outer ditch. Again their leader led them in person up to the deadly rampart, and this time over it into the edge of the town. The defenders, however, attacked them with such vigour as to drive them back again to the rampart and behind the breastwork, where they maintained themselves against all further attempts of the Royalists, who were in truth too few to take any of the hazards of pursuit. In this situation a musketry fire was now kept up between the two parties. Already Legge had been compelled to weaken his scanty force towards the Worcester road on the north side and thus gave an opportunity to another party of Massey's men to break a way through the entrenchments. So in a few minutes a crowd of dragoons poured through and rode down on Legge's flank, forcing him to retire, before this double attack, into the town.

But the gallant Royalists were not yet discomfited. Turning once more on the enemy, seasoned soldiers though these latter were, they drove them gradually back to the ramparts and threatened, after all, to

wrest the victory from the besiegers, whose horse and foot were showing signs of abated zeal and many of them already running for shelter. But now the town was forced at a third place and the defence of the bridge over the Avon being broken, Massey's other division charged up Bridge Street and took the devoted governor and his small band in the rear. A final attack was made on him from all sides, and at length when his situation was obviously desperate Legge and his surviving men laid down their arms. "No battle in the Civil War", says Mr. Willis-Bund, whose illuminating studies of the lesser fights in this cock-pit of the strife are of abiding interest to those who, like himself, know the ground, "reflected greater credit alike on victors and vanquished". Yet this battle, the mere outline of which I have sketched here, is one of innumerable others in this and many parts of England that are scarcely mentioned by historians. The stirring incidents of those four years are beyond the compass of general histories of the war. With all that can be done by the stately diction and invaluable contemporary knowledge of Clarendon, or by the scholarly hand of a Gardiner in our own day, there is perforce left untouched an infinite store of local chronicle that brings the reader face to face with the men and the passions of that wonderful period in an intimate personal fashion which seems to put him behind the scenes and illuminate the pages which history must treat with a broader brush and lose something in so doing. There is happily, however, a great deal of this intimate and personal view of the struggle accessible and familiar in well-known works such as the "Verney Papers", and Ludlow's "Memorials", and the "Life of Falkland". But it is surprising, if one gets into the by-ways of county chronicles

and evidence unknown to or forgotten by the world, what vivid pictures of the average man and woman, confronted with an unprecedented situation and looking at it from a parochial point of view, one gets, and how helpful it is to a better understanding or, at any rate, a greater appreciation of the broader treatment of the historian. The latter can do much, but if you go to him primed with the military and social history of even a single county, within the zone of war, whether Worcester or Wilts, Northumberland or Devonshire or Hereford, he can certainly do much more for you. For it must be remembered that apart from the regular campaigns of the well-known leaders and the main armies on either side, all counties had their two parties, however unequal in strength they might be. In many of the Commonwealth counties of the east, in one or two of the Royalist counties of the west, and in most of Wales, the "under dog" was not articulate perhaps in a military sense, but even here there was a good deal of faction and unsettlement, particularly when the pinching financial strain of civil war cooled the ardour born of sentiment. But numbers of counties may be said to have had their own little wars in chronic progress merging in the larger one when its tide drifted their way. Raids and forays, sieges of small towns and country houses, without any other design than that of clearing the county or district of every armed group belonging to the hostile faction, and very often with no better motive than plunder, were always going forward. The storming of Evesham, however, was not merely an outstanding incident in the exceedingly full military chronicle of Worcestershire, but, as we have seen, a bold stroke of Massey's to cut the line of the Royalist communications between Oxford and the west.

To turn, however, from the spear to the ploughshare it is a pleasant and felicitous legend that traces the modern reputation of the Evesham gardeners back to the monks of old. As a matter of fact, a certain Bernadi, an Italian of noble family but of an English mother, who settled in the town just after the Civil War, seems to have set the example of scientific gardening and given the needed stimulus to his neighbours in an art they have never lost. That Bernadi himself conducted the operations on the rich grounds of the old monastery gives a kind of continuity and a further touch of romance to Evesham horticulture. But there is no doubt that the industry as an export trade dates from his day. Quite early in the eighteenth century we read of loads of fruit and vegetables going by road to Birmingham and by water to Bristol. The Bernadis, father and son, seem both to have been men of originality and enterprise, if the directions into which their talents led them were conspicuously opposed. The son ran away from home at thirteen, and in the absence of details one can well picture so adventurous a youth breaking from the drudgery of the parental market garden. Eventually he enlisted as a private soldier in the service of the Prince of Orange, and by talents and valour rapidly won a captain's commission. He was afterwards wounded at the siege of Gibraltar in 1674, and again in endeavouring to part two friends who were fighting a duel. At the siege of Maestricht he lost an eye, was shot in the arm, and left for dead on the field. He recovered, however, married a Dutch lady of family, and when the English regiments in the Dutch service were recalled to the precarious establishment of James II, Bernadi was one of the few officers who faced the prospect. He fell out with the Prince of Orange, followed

James to Ireland, and, sharing the ruin of his master's fortunes, retired to Holland. Visiting London soon afterwards, he was arrested on suspicion of being concerned in a plot to assassinate William III, thrown into prison, and kept there for more than forty years. He was never legally condemned, and four sovereigns and six parliaments refused to give him the benefit of the doubt. Far into the reign of George II this unfortunate man was still languishing in durance vile on suspicion of designs against an alien monarch whom most people must have practically forgotten all about.

It was a curious business; and the prison arrangements of those days were mysterious, for they did not prevent the prisoner in this case from marrying a devoted second wife, who earned enough to give him some comfort in captivity and bore him ten children. We are told by persons who lived near his time, and do not seem to have recognized anything very peculiar in such an astonishing situation, that he bore his confinement with much resignation, and one can fancy so domestic a life, without any responsibilities, must have helped him to endure it. He was a little man of great courage and constancy, we are told, and in his seventy-fourth year published his life and his grievances, with a portrait of himself in armour. I have ventured to give it at some length here as the career of a native of Evesham and as the quite sensational result of too severe an early apprenticeship to its ruling industry.

In these early days, however, expanding from the excellent example set them on the gardens once tilled by the monks, horticulture was after all limited to the outskirts of the town. Nowadays the whole vale of Evesham talks plums, strawberries, or "sparrow-grass". Even the porter at the country station is an

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expert in the fruit business, and habitually alludes to the weather from the plum or apple point of view at any time of the spring or summer. And as the heavy time of shipping the crop approaches he instinctively raises his cap and mops a yet cool brow at the very mention of it.

It goes without saying that in the vale of Evesham, intermingled with men of the large farmer class, who are either wholly fruit and market-stuff growers or only incidentally so in connexion with stock and grain growing, there are great numbers of the type which gladdens the heart of every economist, namely, the labouring man who has secured or is securing a competency by this intensive culture. Usually as tenants, not often as owners, there are a considerable number of these men who have laid by a good deal of money or expanded from small growers into much larger ones. Every one conversant with country affairs knows how difficult it is to judge whether men of capital are really prospering on the soil. Jenkins, for instance, holds a nice little farm of 300 acres, drives a smart trap, turns up betimes with the hounds, and lives generally like a gentleman in a small, unpretentious, but comfortable way. "Look at Jenkins", says the layman and sceptic as to the woes of agriculture, "and don't tell me farming doesn't pay". But Jenkins's banker and probably his friends could disclose the fact that Jenkins's wife has £300 a year of her own, quite enough to dislocate all outside estimates of Jenkins's balance sheet and render him useless as an economic example. Jones again, who lives in equal comfort and apparently with equal freedom from carking care, has, at any rate, no wife with money. But most of his neighbours could tell our unbeliever that Jones's father was a very warm man, and it is not likely that

any serious hole could have yet been made in his son's portion by making good an annual deficit, if any, in his farm books. This is the sort of thing that, as regards the capitalist class upon the land, is so frequent as to make appearances quite untrustworthy for any practical purpose. Fruit is a precarious article to rely upon. Providence has so arranged matters, and with such nice equity, that the most attractive business under the sun, that of agriculture by employed labour, shall be the least profitable. Any other capitalist would scorn to work on the scale of expectation that the farmer has learned to limit his aspirations to, and be only thankful when he achieves that limit. Fruit-growing has usually presented itself to outside eyes as the most delectable form of the simple and enviable calling of agriculture. It looks even easier and simpler than farming, and it is perhaps hardly necessary to suggest that nothing but the profoundest ignorance of the very elements of agriculture could account for the superstition that in an old country, at any rate, farming is anything but an intricate and difficult business, requiring a peculiar aptitude rather than plodding industry. Fruit, on the contrary, thinks the educated amateur, is a lighter business and offers a field more worthy of his trained intellect. As a matter of fact, it is really a more groovey, straightforward business, and demands more dogged application. The organizing, versatile, hard-headed shrewd judge of soils and stock who knocks a good percentage out of a 500-acre farm is a bigger man mentally than his horticulturist equivalent, capable and assiduous as the last must be to ensure such success as the slings and arrows of climate and Nature permit of. It is the small man working on a small scale with his family, turning the women in when they are wanted,

who is, I am told and can well believe, the fortunate one in the vale of Evesham. A man of this description died recently in middle life worth £25,000, who had started as a fruit-grower with absolutely nothing. But dealing and speculating in fruit is so inextricably mixed up with its production that it is practically impossible to arrive at any accurate conclusions regarding the latter, even if my readers were likely to be interested in so doing. In one parish well-known to me a great many small growers own their own houses and have bought others out of their savings. The new French method of gardening is also commanding a great deal of attention. Not for a moment that one would not hope and believe some measure of success attends the larger operators, many of whom spare no pains in their endeavours to produce the best by the best methods, and to counteract, so far as possible, the sudden onslaughts which Nature makes on both tree and bush fruit.

The vale of Evesham, as may be imagined, has the great advantage of heredity in horticulture, and that is a very great advantage indeed. Melancholy though the fact be, it does not very much matter now how much or how little wheat we grow in England. Population has far outstripped the mere agricultural capacities of the country ; but for the products of intensive farming of perishable or short-keeping stuff, the finest market in the world is always here waiting the grower, and our limited area is not in such case a deterrent factor, as this is not a matter of acreage. Speaking generally, the Anglo-Saxon is a better farmer or grazier than fruit-grower. His genius is better suited to it on either side of the Atlantic. If the money that has been absolutely sunk in fruit-growing on the farther side in the last quarter of a century could be estimated, the total

would make Americans stand aghast, and I speak with some knowledge of the matter.

A few years ago both the American and the Englishman in America thought it was only necessary to plant orange, lemon, apple, and other fruit trees in climates obviously suitable, and to sit down and watch them grow into a fortune for the prescient owner. How much has been learnt since then could be written by thousands in tears and blood. The airy tourist, the city man, the journalist, the globe-trotter, tell in glowing numbers of miles of blossoming orchards or of golden fruit, seen from train or highway. A letter just received from a relative lies before me; the writer is virtually an American, experienced, middle-aged, and almost born into the business of horticulture. It is dated from absolutely the crack orange-growing district of California, to which the writer has returned after an absence of some years. "It is quite sad", says my correspondent, "to see the change that has come over this district. Where all was cheerfulness and sociability and open house the constant frosts and precarious prices have impoverished every one and entirely altered the whole style of life and outlook". This, be it noted, is from admittedly the soundest and most flourishing orange district in California. What has happened over the immense areas of inferior country into which vast sums have been sunk, Heaven only knows. The whole state of Florida, again, was practically ruined by a single night's frost twenty years ago. Not only the crop, but all the lemon and half the orange trees were killed outright. These things fortunately do not happen in the vale of Evesham, where the damage by frost is limited at least to the year's crop of one or other of the many products into which most Evesham growers divide their venture.

Does fruit-growing pay? What a question! Does farming pay? How still more futile an interrogation! If any commercial undertaking in the world depends upon the individual undertaking it, here you have it. The oft-expressed passion of the fledgeling for an "outdoor life" is quite commonly a form of mental laziness and a pronounced dislike to mental exertion. It is not likely that the individual who disposes of his future life on such a flimsy pretext will be clever enough to make a farmer of any kind even if he have the application. Farming is not in the least like Rugby football. One of the most successful farmers of the last generation, in a region well known to fame and intimately known to me, during the last thirty years of his active life, never went out of the house till two o'clock in the afternoon, and, it may be added, seldom went to bed quite sober. He had a master mind and an eagle eye. A large tenant farmer, recently deceased, in a northern county held a high rented mixed farm through all the terrible years of the eighties and nineties, when his neighbours were smashing right and left. His heirs and executors, who are old friends of mine, had occasion to go through the farm accounts, which were beautifully kept, for the whole period, and found no single year of this disastrous cycle in which the balance was not on the right side. This gentleman was an old bachelor of studious habit and powerful intellect, and advanced mathematics was his principal hobby, an eye for stock and a head for tillage his saving. His nearest relative, who was qualified on both accounts to judge, is of the opinion that he would have come out in the first half-dozen Wranglers without any further reading. Another type of genius has the inborn gift for the right estimation of a beast. I do not mean the ordinary normal qualification that every farmer

grows up with or acquires, but that touch of inspiration which places a man without effort, and only the mere brief, necessary experience, at once above his fellows. Two cases to the point rise at once to my mind. As a very young man, and more years ago than I care to remember, I spent a considerable part of two winters in Aberdeenshire among the founders and the chief breeders of the polled Angus cattle that had then just asserted themselves as the most successful type, perhaps, of British cattle at the fat shows and in the beef markets. In those days, at any rate, the tillage part of the big farms was run wholly by stewards, and the farmers lived and moved and had their being in the cattle byres, and at the fairs, and in their own parlours, where they talked black cattle morning, noon, and night; dealt, and swopped, and bought, and sold with each other in a never-ending contest of wit against wit, and comported themselves towards one another as regards their beasts precisely as a community might do who lived by horse-breeding. They drank whisky as if it were water, at any time and all hours, and scarcely any of them seemed one whit the worse for it. For there were hale old men who had been at it all their lives, and whatever the coating of their stomachs may have been, their intellects on the great absorbing subject were unquestionably bright. They would have formed collectively a most painful problem to the ardent temperance reformer. But then the whisky in those days must have been extraordinarily good.

However, this is parenthesis within parenthesis. What I particularly remember by way of illustration is a young man from the south of England, of sufficient capital, the son of a parson near London, and but little over age, who had recently taken the lease of a farm suitable in all respects for the rearing and fattening of

choice polled Angus cattle. Here he set himself up as a bidder for honours in a rather distinguished and an extraordinarily keen-witted circle, who would have plucked their nearest and dearest in this legitimate arena, and looked on an unsophisticated young southron of gentle breeding with money as a monstrous anomaly in itself, and a rare windfall for his neighbours. I don't know whence this young man derived his genius, though I knew him quite well; but he had it, as well, of course; as a very long head, and, I trust, for other reasons, a strong one. He began by marrying into the purple of the polled Angus families, and it might naturally have been imagined that he was lifted into fame thereby. But on the contrary, it was commonly said that the father-in-law, who was a king among cattlemen; had at last met his match, and even admitted over his toddy that this stripling had more than once got the better of him in a straight out-deal, and was a man to be feared, if an embryo prize beast or begetter of prize beasts, in the shape of some bull or heifer calf, was awaiting discovery within ten miles. Islington and Birmingham were more important functions then than now, for reasons obvious to any one familiar with the mere outline of British rural economics for the past forty years. And this young alien, with an Oxford accent gradually broadening into the Doric, had the blue riband of both, the third or fourth winter he spent among that racy and remarkable community. For years his name appeared among the leading prize-winners, and as one of high regard on the pages of agricultural papers. And then there was silence. That a southron from a suburban rectory should have had the gift and the head to exercise it in such company is remarkable, but physically possible. That any southron, however, should have also had an interior

able to endure the convivial accessories then inevitable in that part of the world, for so long a period, would seem incredible, and I drew inferences that may of course be utterly fallacious. "My father", concludes a recent biography of a well-known Border agriculturist not long dead, written by his son, "always led a temperate life, considering the number of twelve-tumbler men among whom he habitually moved". Whether to conclude this particular reminiscence with the "*Autres temps, autres moeurs*" that the reader, I am quite sure, will expect of me, I really do not know!

But we are now in a cider country far out of harm's way, and a beverage more innocent of any suspicion of alcohol than the draught cider of the Avon valley could scarcely be poured into the cup of the temperance enthusiast, though some *hard* cider, as every one knows, if taken in sufficiently copious libations, can make the southern rustic unsteady of gait and merry in demeanour. But the other instance of that inherent genius for a beast, which more have and so many more think they have for a horse, was that of an old friend of mine who went from a public school and Oxford and a country house not a hundred miles from Tewkesbury, to win his spurs among sharp American stock farmers and dealers in almost no time, and in a little more to become a prophet and king among them. This curious gift, however, together with those protracted bargainings which must always be a joy to the man who feels an approaching victory nearly always within him as regards horn and hoof, at any rate, are falling out of use. Half England nowadays sells its cattle and sheep at fortnightly auction sales, where the truculent and the timid, the knowing and the unknowing, are re-

duced to the same dead level for the greater good, no doubt, of the greater number.

The fruit-grower in the vale of Evesham, like fruit-growers on any scale in all countries, is under one undoubted disadvantage of being largely in the hands of a commission merchant in a distant city. The farmer sells his own grain and gets his cheque, such as it is. He also sells or sees sold his own cattle and sheep, and at any rate does not drive home from market with a bill against him in his pocket as the net result of the proceeding. Everybody knows that the producer of perishable fruit sometimes undergoes this lamentable experience, and instead of a cheque his salesman in Birmingham or London sends him notice that his consignment failed to realize the cost of transport, accompanied by a statement of the deficit. These disheartening incidents mostly occur, of course, when Nature has been over-abundant, and that fecundity which the grain-grower prays for the plum-grower dreads. This seems, on the face of it, a most unnatural condition of things. There are prayers for rain and prayers for fine weather as well as forms of public thanksgiving for abundant yields. But to pray for a half crop would be absurd, nay indecent, and the grower of perishable fruit seems to be placed at a disadvantage and in an altogether equivocal position. But the general and average prosperity of the vale of Evesham is, I think, undoubted, and if it is the small man who prospers most, since his labour lies in his own household, such measure cannot be grudged him, as it gladdens the heart and the hearth of the greater number, and holds out encouragement to the lowly. But the larger men, of course, lead the way in scientific appliances and surely deserve success in an infinitely beneficial industry that is happily

at least beyond the competition of the foreigner. Some interesting experiments are going forward, too, in the shape of fighting night-frosts in orchards by an arrangement of oil-lamps, an idea borrowed, I think, from America.

But, after all, no fruit in Britain has anything approaching the importance, for the consumer, of the apple. It abides with the householder always, that is to say, so long as he can get it or can afford it. The reader might justifiably be bored with a dissertation on the culture of pears, plums, and damsons, of currants, French beans, or asparagus, transient luxuries that never fail us for their brief and acceptable season and are forgotten. But the apple is always with us, or we should like to have it always with us. Yet the apple is rarely cheap in spite of immense importations and advances regularly to a price that, if you figure it up on an apple tree, seems to transform an orchard, though wrongly of course, into a sort of gold mine. Where lies the tremendous leakage? In the vale of Evesham most of the orchards bear cider apples, to be sure, and in their case you have by comparison an obviously indifferent business. Cider ought, no doubt, to be a more popular beverage, particularly as the doctors have pronounced it to be not only innocuous as a gout-producer, but positively antagonistic to that frequent scourge of full-blooded Britons. But it is not, and there, for the present, is an end of it. Draught cider is retailed by nearly every country inn in the vale of Avon from Stratford down, at a penny a glass, but the country-folk, who almost alone drink it, and that in much less proportion than of old to beer and spirits, are not susceptible to the academic opinion of physicians on such matters. The bottled article is no doubt a most delightful

drink, but too expensive to be really popular, being nearly double the price of Guinness's stout. But it is the cooking apple, which will keep, that is the real crux of the apple question in England. No one can say that American and Canadian competition stands in the way of the English grower, for the price of threepence and even fourpence a pound, which we habitually pay through much of the year, or, speaking roughly, a penny an apple, would be extraordinarily profitable at half that price to the grower. Something, no doubt, is utterly wrong. I say nothing of the eating apple, with its particular market, because the cooking apple is of course so immeasurably more important. A raw apple is a desirable and pleasant incident, but the cooked article plays an incalculably greater part in English domestic economy. The households who have trees enough for their own use when weighed in the balance with those who have not are almost a negligible quantity. If the orchardist got half or a third of what the consumer pays, and had an orchard bearing an average crop one year, with another of keeping apples, his profits must be very great. Yet, so far as my experience goes of the apple counties, there are scarcely any people really making money in providing one of the staple products of English life, high price though the English householder pays for it. The Nova Scotian, to take our nearest rivals, if a neglected or mismanaged industry can be said to have rivals, is content with one to two dollars a barrel, or, in other words, from a farthing to something over a halfpenny a pound to the producer—and though Nova Scotia may or may not be making money, it is a great staple industry there, the success of which she blazes on illustrated literature from her centres of advertisement. Her expenses are quite as

great, labour is much higher, and the initial cost of land not much less, and, in the circumscribed area required for an orchard, amounts to nothing in any case. It is quite certain that the average English apple orchard is a ridiculous thing to look at as regards pruning and cultivation. The trees are left to grow like the timber of a game covert, and the ground is kept in grass, to its utter detriment, for the trifling pasturage value to a few odd cows or calves, a matter of shillings as against pounds where the fruit is considered. But here in the vale of Evesham other fruits are handled with the utmost science, and apple orchards are to some extent dealt with as if the fruit and not the ground beneath were of prime consequence. In those parts of Canada, east and west, and in the United States, where apples are grown for market, the ground is kept carefully cultivated and the trees scientifically pruned. That, no doubt, is one reason why growers there can produce them at even eighteenpence a bushel.

CHAPTER VI

THE UPPER VALE OF EVESHAM

THE wide uplifted road that runs a six-mile course across the vale from Evesham, in a south-easterly direction to Broadway, is a popular one owing to the repute acquired of late years by the last-named village. It is an interesting enough road in itself, following along an ancient route known as the Ridge-way and in thorough keeping with its name. For much of the way it provokes the sensation of travelling along a high railroad embankment, being screened by neither trees nor hedges of any moment, and opening the country up and down the vale of Evesham, to the right, that is to say, and to the left, and to delightful pur-pose under the summer sunshine. The substitution of orchards and fruit-gardens where woodland would elsewhere be grouped about the rich pastoral country is not, save perhaps in the blossoming season, altogether an advantage. It is curious and even un-English, but it at least opens the foreground and middle dis-tance to the richer sweeps beyond; Bredon looming huge and blocking up the vale, the Malverns gradually opening their remoter peaks like Welsh mountains, and the Cotswolds displaying their rounded woody ramparts for a score of miles.

There are no villages upon this ridge road, but all over the rolling plain of the vale a spire here or a tower there, rising above the foliage which gathers round them,

give finish to a picture that is as fair a one of the kind as England can show. Whether it is the old red sandstone or, as here, the new, concerns only the geologist ; as a feature in landscape either are invaluable. And above all, as the summer sun begins its downward course, the radiancy diffused over a country whose soil is red, sheds a passing glory over a comparatively commonplace scene ; and here in the vale of Evesham, where Nature is lavish and supplies a background of dignity and beauty, the combination is singularly felicitous. Many of the thousand American visitors who every summer traverse this and neighbouring highways must be reminded, if they know it, of the landscape of Virginia, where the red soil glows against the green of the woods and the deep blue of the hills with an opulence surpassing in mere colour, indeed, anything that the red sandstone of Worcester or Hereford, of Devonshire or Breconshire or Berwickshire can show. Not here, indeed, is such a lurid afterglow possible as, for a few brief minutes following the dip of the sun behind the Blue Ridge Mountains of Virginia, covers with illusive glory that long ruthless treatment of a warm and generous soil. But there the advantage ends. Turn the light of day on to those briery wasted fields, those red-gullied hillsides, those meagre crops, that innocent strangers and moderns from north of the Potomac are led to suppose was the result of the Civil War, and then turn it on to the velvet pastures, the prolific fallows, the lush hedgerows of the vale of Avon, or any other bit of English landscape—How incredible the contrast ?

The thought is not quite irrelevant, and if it comes often to the mind of the writer who knows both so well, an ample excuse is ready to hand in the ancient little church of Wickhamford, but half a mile east of this

Ridgeway road. For here are all kinds of associations with Virginia. On the north side of the altar, extending some way down the chancel wall, is a resplendent seventeenth century monument to the Sandys family, who still own the manor, though resident at the greater property of Ombersley on the Severn. Two altar tombs are here extended under a canopy supported by slender black marble pillars enriched by armorial bearings. On one of these Sir Samuel Sandys, the son of the famous Archbishop, founder of the Worcestershire family, lies in armour with bare head, his hands raised in prayer and his feet upon a griffin. By his side in like devotional attitude is his wife Mercy, of the ancient family of Culpepper, whose monuments may be seen a few miles north of the Avon in Feckenham Church.

On the western half of the same long, sculptured tomb, crowded with the kneeling figures of male and female Sandys, and beneath the same gorgeous canopy, lie Edwin, the other son, and his lady, in similar guise and attitude. For the son and his father died within a few days of one another in the early autumn of 1625, The wife of the latter, who had already borne the eight children who kneel so dutifully beneath her, was from the remote isle of Anglesea, but of its most distinguished House of Bulkeley, and she survived her husband for over half a century. This lady may have some passing interest, even in effigy, from the mere fact of having herself lived through the entire Stuart period, born as she was under a Tudor and buried after the accession of William of Orange. But it is the association of the Sandys with Virginia that ought to interest the true American pilgrim even more than the slab beneath to Penelope Washington, which naturally seizes the fancy of the guide-book writer. For Sir Edwyn,

another son of the archbishop and brother of Sir Samuel, whose resplendent effigy lies before us, was treasurer and head of the Virginia Company, and himself drew up and presented the colony with its first charter of free government. So liberal was this Imperialist in his views of colonial administration that James I grumbled that he would sooner have the devil than Edwyn Sandys concerned with the new colonies in America.

Sandys, however, did even more than this, for he provided the planters of the young commonwealth with wives, sending out that memorable consignment of ninety virtuous maids to Jamestown, who were snapped up so instantaneously by the colonists at the rate of a hundred and twenty pounds of tobacco per head. The experiment proved so satisfactory from the young women's point of view that they wrote home and induced sixty of their young, handsome, and charming friends to make a similar venture. How many thousands of living Americans now owe their being to the far-sighted consideration of this enterprising man we cannot guess. The interest of the Sandys family being so much concerned with this part of England it is more than probable that a considerable number of these mothers of Virginia were collected in it. Sir Edwyn's brother, George Sandys the poet, actually went to Virginia; for one of the young women kneeling here before her father Sir Samuel, married Sir Francis Wyatt of Baxley, who went out as governor in 1621, taking the Royal Charter procured for the colony by his wife's uncle with him. This other uncle, George Sandys, as I have said, went too. Dryden calls him "the best versifier of a former age", and Drayton, who a dozen years previously dispatched the first hapless founders of Virginia with a singularly stirring

ode, now apostrophized his friend George Sandys with possibly a touch of banter.

> And worthy George, by industry and use,
> Let's see what lines Virginia will produce:
> Entice the muses thither to repair,
> Entreat them gently, train them to that air,
> For they from hence may thither hap to fly.

George translated Ovid's "Metamorphoses" on the banks of the James River; but a land where scalps were still being lifted merrily was not yet ripe for scholars or poets. This one nearly lost his own hair, since the Indian massacre of 1622 burst upon his dreams. He was by no means, however, a mere dreamer and man of letters. Mechanical enterprise would almost seem to have run in the family. For as a nephew made Shakespeare's Avon navigable, so the poet uncle put up the first water-mill in Virginia, and indeed in the American colonies. He signally failed to plant the Muses in Virginia, unless indeed Edgar Allan Poe may be credited, by courtesy, to the old Dominion which would alone almost justify Drayton's invocation of three centuries earlier. One might fancy that the horrors of 1622 in Virginia had a sobering effect on George Sandys, for he came home to put the Psalms of David into English verse, a work for which it is said Charles I in his hours of captivity showed a great partiality. The Culpeppers, too, as represented by the lady on the eastward tomb, have a conspicuous association with Virginia seeing that Charles II in a merry mood granted the whole colony to Thomas Lord Culpepper and another noble wight. There was such a very natural uproar, however, from its 40,000 souls, that the transfer was reversed by the easy young king, but Culpepper was afterwards made

governor of the colony, and a well-known county there still commemorates the fact and preserves a name, now forgotten in England, in quite familiar use beyond the Atlantic.

But, after all, the local *vade-mecum* is quite unconscious of all these close associations of the Sandys of Wickhamford with the oldest of the American colonies, though it fortuitously directs the attention of the American visitor to the sequestered little church for another reason. For beneath the Sandys's mounts lies a slab engraved with the name of Penelope Washington, and the family arms, from which the American flag is said to be derived. A Latin inscription tells us that she died in 1697, and was a daughter of that distinguished and renowned soldier Colonel Henry Washington by Elizabeth Parkington of Westwood (near Droitwich) and much more besides. Colonel Washington was of the Northamptonshire family and an extremely zealous Royalist officer, being Governor of Evesham for a time and much distinguished in the stubborn defence of Worcester in 1646. In what precise relationship Penelope would stand to the Father of his country is a point we need not here grapple with. But the family and the arms are quite enough to turn the good American pilgrim to Wickhamford, little suspecting how much closer association with the history of his country lies in the mortal dust that it covers. For though every American of education knows, I trust, the story of the shipment of wives to Virginia, only a very few, even of Virginians, unless they have altered vastly, since I knew them pretty intimately, have much acquaintance with their colonial history beyond some highly idealized conceptions presented to them in picture magazines, interesting but sadly inaccurate historical novels,

and some strange legends of a gorgeous ancestry. These last are due, I am quite sure, partly to a very vivid imagination that encounters no criticism, and partly to a very natural misconception of old English social life and a prodigious overrating of the country squire's younger son and the glories of that very widely distributed possession—a coat of arms. The Sandys's, however, from the time of the archbishop, have been very much more than average country squires. But it may interest Aunt Maria to know that their pedigree at the very zenith of their distinction shows both a London haberdasher and a grocer quite obviously on family and marriage terms with their knightly relatives and not in the least bit snubbed by either.

The old Sandys manor house adjoins the churchyard and is a delightful picture of seventeenth century "black and white" architecture. As an alternative family mansion it has been abandoned for generations no doubt. The rather dull-looking, big, early eighteenth century house overshadowing the charming half-timbered village of Ombersley has for all reasonable time been identified with a name, ennobled now for some generations. Not that one should make use of so misleading a term in matters English, seeing that it has neither sense nor logic outside its proper continental significance. To speak of ennobling an old family of territorial influence and a coat of arms is, of course, absurd and would sound so to a German, Italian, or Dutchman. While, on the other hand, to imagine a *noblesse* who had suffered haberdashers, grocers, goldsmiths, attorneys, and physicians, quite gladly among their ranks, and often maintained themselves in wealth and dignity directly and indirectly by their means is inconceivable to the continental. We

must leave it at that, a situation obviously impossible for a foreigner to understand.

A wholesome confusion this, and beyond doubt the very saving of England, though affording boundless scope for the harmless vanities of pretension, vulgarity, and make-believe. The normal Englishman is hopelessly ungenealogical, with an abiding reverence, however, for wealth and position. To do him justice he usually cares little more for his own ancestors when he has them than for other people's. Nor again, except in novels, do the country people, after the first actual rupture of relationships, entailed by transfer of property, care two straws whether the squire's family have been there for ten generations or two; but they care even yet for the squire *qua* squire. This, too, is practical, not sentimental. And I believe that position, rather than breeding, has always filled the social eye of the ordinary Englishman since the Tudor period. This cannot be admitted in fiction, as one string to play upon would be lost, and it is a useful make-believe sometimes even in real life. But the fact remains that the material unimaginative Englishman (not the Scotsman or Welshman) so long as there are no obvious disqualifications, takes off his hat to the man in possession, or, if an equal, accepts him as one without a single thought as to his grandfather. Surely no country in Europe was ever so happy and comfortable a one for the families of the successful trader; and thus more or less it has ever been since the time of the Tudors, in spite of "Aunt Maria's", male and female, and their pathetic and picturesque illusions.

There is a little station at Broadway half a mile short of the village on the new line recently built from Evesham to Cheltenham. Hard by it is an extended

string of recently erected and conspicuously seated villas, with doubtless more to come, that proclaim their purpose to be that of harbouring the summer visitor with merciless disregard of æsthetic effects, and with unabashed contempt for harmony: for we have now crossed the line into the stone country. The village of Broadway spreads up the hill a few hundred yards beyond in all the mellow beauty of the grey Cotswold stone and flag. Here below, however, is a dazzling suburb representing the modern builder's conception of the half-timbered style such as you may see all over the south of England, spread naked and unashamed along a bare ridge—a veritable eyesore in the delectable vale of Evesham. Broadway, however, is happily unaffected by its inconsiderate suburb; though itself so extremely self-conscious, it may be doubted if this much would be conceded! Twenty years ago and save for this excrescence, precisely of the same size, house for house as now, Broadway had for the outer world no existence. It is entertaining to discuss its rise to fame with the country-folk in the neighbourhood. To some, though the fact is overwhelming, the cause of it is more than half a mystery. How should it be otherwise! What is a village green and a further stretch of broad ascending road all bordered with grey gabled stone houses, or cottages of varying fashion but forming a singularly harmonious and felicitous whole, to them! Nothing, indeed, but the ordinary, dull, inevitable necessities of their lives. Probably, if truth be told, they have a lurking admiration for the neat villas above the station!

Broadway had some little importance in the coaching period, as it was the first stop at the western foot of the Cotswolds, upon whose lower slopes it lies. It was of much consequence, too, in the Civil War as a Royalist

station. The king and his nephews, Rupert and Maurice, were here again and again, and it was right on the line between Oxford and the west. But coaches, kings, and princes had all alike been forgotten, and Broadway had subsided into the comfortable lethargy of an agricultural village, between a good tillage country on the one side and a fine sheep country on the other, when the first ripples of the boom struck it. The latter was the more grateful, perhaps, as the gloom of the eighties and early nineties, which the wayfaring layman forgets if he ever realized, but the farmer and landowner do not, must have settled down somewhat sadly upon it. The chief authors of those evil times, our cousins from across the Atlantic, have certainly made up to Broadway for any ills they inadvertently wrought it in the past. For among the thousand strangers who now annually make the pilgrimage and raise the dust of its ample street they are by no means the least conspicuous. In brief, Broadway is now somewhat a spoiled child of fortune. Not all the aborigines like this. Some of them complain that they have been turned out of their cottages to make way for the letters of lodgings, while others, who would like to be handy to the scene of their daily labours in turnip fields, orchards, or sheepfolds, complain that they cannot get quarters. Not thus, however, a veteran I fell in with here one day, for instead of the workhouse, which might have been his lot, he had fallen into comparative clover. He was an agricultural labourer who had lived long enough for the considerable family that he had raised to forget all about him in their scattered distant careers and middle-aged trials and troubles. But instead of the workhouse he had found favour, on account of his skill between the stilts of a plough, so he told me, in the eyes of a Cornish widow,

who rented a small farm in the neighbourhood. Now Cornwall is by far and away the most written-up county in Britain, more, even, than Devonshire. I often wonder how any one can have the hardihood to deliberately sit down and write another book upon it. One is forced to suspect that it is because so many literary Londoners do not know any other of the remoter counties. The coast of Pembroke just opposite, for instance, is very similar and nearly as fine, the interior a thousand times more interesting for every reason, and there are no tourists. But I have never seen even a magazine article on Pembrokeshire, which is thoroughly characteristic of the sheep-like habits of the British holiday-maker. I have encountered the Cornishman, however, as a farmer and a colonist in more than one part of England, and he or she have invariably aroused my admiration. Like their kindred the Welsh, who have poured into Northamptonshire and Warwickshire since the break up of the good old times, to their great advantage, the thrifty Cornish man or woman prospers much on the fat soil of the Midlands. I heard a good deal in ten minutes of this eminently capable lady from her appreciative helpmate, and the consideration in the matter of holidays and pocket-money with which she treated him, and was glad to think that a deserving "veteran of labour" had floated into so safe an anchorage.

Broadway belonged to the abbey of Pershore till the Dissolution, when, as so often happened, it fell into obscure hands, only to be parted with soon afterwards at no doubt a handsome profit. The well-known Worcestershire family of Shelden then owned it, who intermarried with the Savages of Elmley and then sold land to no less than thirteen freeholders, most of whom seem to have been armigers. This is only worth mentioning as a mere passing instance for the few who

care for such things of the wide distribution of property in former days. As a matter of course, this altered as time went on, and one finds a few of these many owners remaining in possession of the whole, among them the Winningtons and Lygons (Beauchamp family). The former have been for some centuries seated in the Teme valley above Worcester and always a power in that country.

But Broadway itself has fallen upon altogether different times and is a good deal more than what Squire Harbington of Hindlip in his seventeenth century notes describes it: "A broad highway from the shepherd's cotes on the mountain wolds down to the most fruitful vale of Evesham." It has been taken possession of by persons of leisure mostly, from far countries or counties, now this many years. The larger houses that were farmsteads, inns, or what not in the days of its obscurity, are now the abodes of ease and elegance, while the cottages have been prinked up for the most part for the entertainment of the summer lodger. All round the triangular green and up the long wide way leading to the mile of steep drag on to the Cotswold summit the yellowy grey stone houses of all qualities and at all angles are on their very best behaviour. It is of a truth a beautiful old village, combed and groomed, to be sure, into a condition quite impossible in real village life and enacting altogether a different rôle from that which it played for some centuries until yesterday when it came, so to speak, on show. I expect it plays at being an old-time village still in the off-season when the lodgers have departed, the motors have ceased from troubling, and the Lygon Arms, a fine old hostelry as regards the outer walls, reduced its summer establishment. There is nothing archaic in the atmosphere, however, of the interior of

this now famous inn. The gorgeous wights, fresh from Birmingham, New York, or London, immaculately clad and with trousers scarcely creased, who prevail around or within the doors might well abash the modest wayfarer, cyclist, or pedestrian with the honest stain of travel upon him. Nor does the true wanderer want to be ministered to by a Cockney waiter in a dress suit and white tie any more than he wants to wander at twenty-five miles an hour. Nor again would it profit him to demand a pint of draught cider at the Lygon Arms, though twenty years ago, I'll warrant, a bumper of this best of summer drinks would have sparkled for him gladly. Indeed, it is well to remember that in the apple-country the dispensing of cider on draught is the mark of the homely unaspiring house that has not yet emerged from its old local character. Such a demand is so obviously resented by the more aristocratic landlord in the Avon valley, that I have given myself much mild entertainment by consistently asking for it when cast perforce upon their quite uninteresting hospitality. This oppressive atmosphere of smart apparel in popular wayside hostelries is altogether a new feature of travel. Men and women step out of motors nowadays, cast their outer wrapping from them, and emerge all radiant as if straight from the verandah of a yacht club or a garden party. No wonder mine host so often frowns at the mention of cider on draught. In former days the few people who beat about the country, whatever their degree or whatever their method of progress, were elaborately horsy at the worst, but for the most part in harmony with their object and surroundings. But there is another and altogether more modest house of call at the foot of the village, lurking picturesquely behind a pleasantly shaded lawn where the way-worn traveller who has a mind for quiet and a taste for good

cider will find a more peaceful anchorage. I had a fancy to spend a fortnight in Broadway as a pleasant perch from which to explore the vale of Evesham, and interviewed two or three householders, whose quarters were recommended. The period was late June, and I quickly discovered that something like an apology was due for imagining that an application at so late a date for entertainment in the ensuing holiday season was in order. I forget for how many months or even years previously I was informed with considerable *empressement* that each of these much-in-request sets of rooms had been pre-empted.

I do not know exactly what the ordinary mortal does with himself for any length of time in Broadway, charming though the village is. He must inhale, for one thing, an enormous amount of dust, for the motor will be always with him and close to his windows. This passing curiosity on my part in no sense applies to the American of taste. I have lived myself for so many years in that country and among Americans that, in spite of an intimacy more than common with the varied beauties of my own country and its associations, I can still recall with a little effort how it used to look after a long period of absence. It is absolutely impossible for an Englishman, without some measure of sustained familiarity with a transatlantic atmosphere, to realize how bewitching this little island looks to an American with anything of a soul within him. We ourselves are so familiarized with the velvet carpet that clothes the land, with the mellow buildings that cover it, with the hedgerows that lay their lush tracery all over it, that they mean almost nothing to us, though, I imagine, a protracted sojourn on the Continent, despite all varieties of magnificent scenery, must bring home to many what a unique land is ours.

But the American, after all, the true American, I mean, of that British stock which made his country and possesses a mind, cannot look on England as he looks on France or Germany. The very notion is, of course, foolish. Any Englishman who is capable of thinking at all can form some estimate of what this country means to an American of British descent visiting it for the first time. But it is necessary to have lived in America, whether in its beautiful or in its duller regions matters nothing, to understand what the mere surface of England looks like to a visitor from there. And for the same reason it is by no means those scenes that most appeal to us English folk that give our American kinsmen the acutest form of that special pleasure which they derive from English scenery. We are so accustomed to the ordinary domestic, gracious, low-pitched landscape, we can scarcely imagine anything else, and consequently regard it as commonplace, and most naturally go to counties of a wilder and more uplifted character for our ideals of beauty. It is in what is commonplace, or at least normal to us, that the American will at first at any rate find his chief pleasure ; the restful, mellow, ancient peace, the well-groomed velvet pastures, the timbered parklands, the flowery hedgerows, the villages with their wealth of architectural and floral detail. We can admire all these things ourselves, but almost take for granted that they are the normal accessories of an ordinary country-side. As to the eyes with which the American sees them, we can, I repeat, have no conception. Circumstances have enabled me at one time to look through these glasses so nearly as one of themselves that the rest is simple. The picture thus presented, merely in a physical sense, is outside verbal definition,

and is also a matter of atmosphere. Save for the absence of hedges and old buildings it would not be easy to define on paper precisely wherein the vast difference lies between many a landscape in the Eastern States, and an average English rural scene. The crops are virtually the same, and the fields bear the mark of the same agricultural traditions and general habit of life, speaking broadly; the oak, the elm, and the ash are quite likely to be predominant in either picture, the Lombardy poplar with equal probability to sway over the Pennsylvania or Massachusetts homesteads as over that of Warwickshire. Even the American farmhouse may well be of stone or brick, toned by many score of years, and flanked by orchards ripe in age and occasionally in as picturesque disarray, with all the other amenities an old farming community gathers round it. But this is all of no use. The English landscape comes with a shock of delight and surprise on the American with eyes to see or sense to feel, while on the top of the mere physical effect comes the intense appeal to the storehouse of his mind, crammed as it must needs be with men and deeds of the book-world that have only lacked as yet the stage to picture them on. It is all very well to talk of Paris, or Rome, or Jerusalem. But to the properly constituted American the first sight of England, I venture to say with some confidence, is an infinitely more memorable moment for reasons too obvious to waste time upon. Americans, too, are more sentimental and imaginative as a people, and much closer observers of material things than Britons, who are capable at any time of selecting the night for travelling through a fresh and interesting country they may never see again, for some trifling reason of meals or comfort. And as a conclusion to this long

homily, the American pressed for time assuredly finds along the banks of the Avon, from Stratford to Tewkesbury, the kind of English landscape that embodies most that he is looking for. He has not such strong reasons as we have for going to our more picturesque counties. Not, by the way, that these in any way resemble the Adirondacks or the Alleghanies—for they also are unique in character in the whole world—but they need not be marked " urgent " for the American, delightful as he must and does find them. If time admits of this he should not be misled by an English point of view and go to Devonshire. He only finds a compromise between two classes of landscape, and is generally disappointed. He should make for Wales, where he finds our quality of mountain scenery at its best, and the mediæval castle which he justly values bristling grim and thick. He is also confronted by another race and another tongue in his own motherland in a fullness of survival for which he is scarcely ever prepared, and is in consequence pleasantly and properly staggered.

The old parish church of St. Edburg in Broadway, some way to the south of the village, is happily preserved though not regularly used. A first glimpse at the modern one proclaims its erection as anterior to the period when Broadway became conscious of her æsthetic attractions. But the old church is an interesting cruciform building with aisles and a central embattled tower. The pillars of the nave are Norman, but the rest of the building, like so many others, carries on the story in stone to a dominating climax in the Perpendicular. There are some old brasses and mural tablets, the latter to Savages and Taylors of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, both ancient local families and both at different periods

owners of Middle Hill on the slope of the Cotswolds just above, and the principal country seat adjacent to the village. This fell afterwards to the Phillips family, who made it renowned throughout England for their valuable collection of books and manuscripts, afterwards removed to Thirlestaine House, Cheltenham. The summit of the Cotswolds is just 1000 feet above the sea and about half that elevation above Broadway. It would be out of our beat to pursue the highway or any other way up the lofty green ridge in the direction of Bourton-on-the-Hill or Stow-on-the-Wold. We have already stood on Bredon, where the view of the same panorama is if anything finer. The slopes of the Cotswolds upon this vale of Evesham side, with their swelling folds and rich woodland, are more engaging than their higher altitudes. I have already alluded to my own disappointment on first surmounting their tops above Broadway and finding myself confronted by another edition only of the low country, subject of course to the normal effects of a much higher altitude. But the Cotswold country as a whole has been subjected to such exhaustive literary treatment, and at no better hands than those of my friend and old schoolfellow, Mr. H. A. Evans, it would be the height of superfluity to move a step beyond Broadway in these pages. Indeed, if I have even here been tempted to discursiveness, such a departure has possibly been provoked by a sub-consciousness of how much has been said of the æsthetic properties of the place and the restoration of its old houses.

With this slight sense of oppression still upon me, as one pursuing a perhaps exhausted subject, I shall follow here in fancy a road I have followed most frequently in fact for my own delectation, and one

that skirts for a time the base of the hills and makes a pleasant circuit from Evesham. Bending northwest from Broadway and running into Gloucestershire one encounters the three villages of Willersley, Weston, and Aston Subedge, while high on a bench of the Cotswolds above them, hemmed in by timber, is the beautiful and characteristic little town of Chipping Campden. Willersley displays a spacious village green, its Cotswold houses set around it and slightly raised in becoming irregularity. The two Subedges are mere hamlets, but each of them charming so far as they go. Weston has two gabled stone manor houses, one of them flush with the road, and a decorated church with a fine growth of old yew trees around it. Aston (Easton) Subedge has several gabled and mullion-windowed stone houses, over which the creepers riot lavishly, besides a long black and white farmhouse abutting on the highway. Here a road, turning sharply, shoots straight up between high wooded banks to Campden. But better even than the group of foothill villages just mentioned is Mickleton yet a mile farther on,—perhaps only because there is more of it. Among other things there stands upon its village street an ample and finely proportioned Tudor house still complete in its stone mullions and partly in its chimney stacks. Behind lofty sexagonal stone gate-posts lurks another old mansion of the Queen Anne style in flagged roof and walls and dormers, but with stone mullioned windows and Early Georgian doorway and hood. Indeed, dormers are strikingly prevalent in every class of building, where they are possible, all through this country. There is a most imposing church, too, at Mickleton with an octagonal spire nearly 100 feet high, nave, chancel, aisles, and a

remarkable two-storied battlemented perpendicular porch.

But all this has been amply written about by others, and so, I need not say, has Campden. I admit with shame that till I fell upon it unawares one summer afternoon not long ago, I had never even heard of it except vaguely as a mere name in Civil War literature. It goes without saying that I was properly amazed, more particularly as hitherto I had scarcely any acquaintance with this Cotswold type. Campden is one of the most highly regarded of the many small towns which best express it, and is to the Avon side of the range what Burford is to the Oxfordshire slopes. It is a regular object of pilgrimage now from Stratford, or I should not venture to stray, even for a few words upon it, so far from the Avon. The magnificent Perpendicular church, built and beautified on the great profits of the wool trade when this region both grew and manufactured the staple so abundantly, is alone worth a visit. Close by are some curious and striking fragments of the great house whose wanton burning in the Civil War by a Royalist swash-buckler, on his evacuation of it, lit up, it is said, the march of the Parliament army over the top of the Cotswolds. The long array of gabled almshouses beneath the church, the wide, slanting street, with Tudor market and town hall planted a stone's-throw apart in its centre, the many ancient houses upon either hand, the peaceful atmosphere of a town, too solid for material decay, but whose main business has long left it : all this and much else besides contribute to the charm of Campden and give it the distinction that it has earned among the lovers of old England's past. A great deal could be said about it, its story in war and peace, its ancient trade, its architectural beauties, its old families, and

not, of course, forgetting *The Campden Mystery*. But these have been told in many books, and in this one I am concerned with the plain rather than the upland.

On one of the hottest afternoons I remember in England for many years, I was breaking a long cycle ride at the principal inn of one of these little foothill Cotswold towns, and waiting for a cooler and a later hour to resume my journey. The heat fairly simmered over the silent street and had made of it for the moment a virtual desert. So I sat down in the cool bar parlour with a pint of cider and a pipe. There was not a sound in the house but the ticking of a grandfather clock and the busy scrape of a commercial traveller's pen from behind the open door of the coffee-room. The window by me looked into an old-fashioned yard where a couple of gigs blistered in the blazing sun and the stamp or snort of a horse came once in a while through dark stable doorways in the white-washed wall. This sweltering silence, however, only reflected the general condition of the atmosphere, the exhaustion of every living thing save for a quite extraordinary contrast it afforded to the stentorian vigour of a two-part comedy that was being performed in a room across the angle of the yard from my window.

I took it to be the public bar, and the two orators who apparently contended for mastery in it, were obviously in a glorious state of oblivion to trifles of temperature, though perfectly articulate—just "market-peart", in fact. They were obviously not working men, for such snatches of their shouted converse as broke loose from the involved duet of which most of it consisted, showed them to be men of substance. They did not talk the somewhat deprecating intonation of the vale, but the rich, broad, burring, slow, emphatic speech of north Wilts and the land

just beyond, which fell on my ears with an old familiar sound. When a couple of British yeomen in the mellow stage start an argument there is not usually much give and take. They talk together till the breath of the weakest fails and the survivor drives in his point with something like a shout of victory. The ancient speech of Wilts and upland Gloucester was going forward here in the good old-fashioned rural style of conversation which had reached the heated but not the quarrelsome stage.

"*My arr'gment's this*", rang out the first voice, but the second strangled it in its very birth, and the two ran along in a confused babel of sound till the one gave out and the obviously stronger started afresh and louder. "*My arr'gment's this*", shouted he, but the other had got his breath and knocked the argument sky-high in another long scrimmage of sound which again gradually wore itself out, the stouter man once more rising triumphant. "*My arr'gment this, my vam'ly's the oldest, I tell 'ee, on the estate*", and then again they fell to in a long discordant duet which sank gradually to a confused murmur, both talking with evident signs of temporary exhaustion. Possibly a pull at the bottle brought them up to the scratch again, and the topic obviously still ran upon genealogical and reminiscent lines. For the first voice rang out over the hot, silent yard and through the wide-open window to the commercial room where the pen of the traveller still squeaked steadily.

"*I tell 'ee I know'd thy grandfeyther*". The second voice would evidently have none of it, and there was another long bout which could not possibly have furthered the settling of so knotty a question. It was like one of those old-fashioned glees such as, "Where the Bee Sucks" or, "O Who will o'er the Downs so

Free", in which a bar or two of a solo was sung and then the other parts rushed in together with a clamour of conflicting words but musically harmonious. Here, however, there was neither music nor harmony.

"*I tell 'ee I know'd thy grandfeyther*", once more rang over the yard, vibrated through the inn and set the horses stamping and rattling their chains in the dark, hot stable. After another chorus the dominant voice emerged again with a trifle more of advantage, and consequently more deliberation, accompanied by an audible bang or something.

"*I tell 'ee I know'd thy grandfeyther; I wur a bit of a nipper, to be sure*——" But the under dog was not to be denied, and evidently still sceptical, he made another effort and broke up any attempt at further detail, till both voices gradually waned, and for the first time the other got his innings, and in a slow, soft drawl replied, "*Why, that must a bin ye'r-rr-s ago*". And if you know that lingo and can hear in fancy the long, soft burr with the tongue turned back on the roof of the mouth, you will understand that the word *years*, so ineffective in print, represented quite effectively in sound a period that might cover about a century and a half. The landlady now came in with her sewing and, of course, gratified my curiosity, and I learned that my entertainers were two old farmers from away back on the Cotswolds. Furthermore, that there had been a midday audit dinner of Squire B——'s tenants, and that these veterans, scorning the ascetic modern brevity of that once great and protracted function, invariably sat tight, as in the days of old, till proper justice had been done to their landlord's cheer, and made brave show to maintain the traditions of the past amid a degenerate age. I can well remember, and have many times encountered

and come out unscathed from those formidable ceremonies that were rigidly observed on the other side of the Cotswolds in the days of my youth and of high prices, of deep potations and strong stomachs. The port and punch, the brandy and water, the churchwarden pipes, the song singing and hilarity which accompanied the passing of the farmer's cheque to his landlord are, I think, no more. Probably that transaction became so painful and was associated with so much tribulation to both parties that mirth would have been unseemly. So, for any one who remembered the past, and was susceptible to its sentimental influences, there was indeed no little pathos in the spectacle of these two old-timers whom, of course, I sought out sitting at the otherwise deserted board, living protests, as it were, against a degenerate day. Men who, in their time, must have sold Cotswold wool at half a crown a pound, when the Cotswold breed, now almost vanished, covered these hills, and held fifty shillings to be but a moderate price for their wheat. They were rising from the board, as I took care to ascertain before I joined them, or it might have been perilous. Whether the question of the grandfather was settled I know not, for my presence turned what was left of their supply of eloquence into other channels.

From Aston Subedge, in swerving back again towards Evesham, Honeybourne is but a trifle off the road, a village lying in the flat which, from all the higher ground about it presents a singularly gracious look, with its lofty church spire springing above the tall elms which half conceal the dwellings. You may go if you choose from either of the Subedge villages to Honeybourne, along a stage of the Roman way known as Icknield Street, which runs to meet the Upper

Salway at Birmingham, having crossed the fosseway at Bourton on the water. It is little more than a lane, but runs as straight as a ruled line for some miles, and has the added attraction of proclaiming its character without book or map.

An old local saw runs:

> There was a church at Honeybourne
> When Evesham was but bush and thorn.

But the tables in any case were turned, for Honeybourne, like many of its neighbours, belonged to Evesham for nearly a thousand years. At the Dissolution it was divided between Westminster, Evesham's old enemy and rival, and Sir Philip Hoby. This knight, a native of Leominster and of Welsh origin, served his country with such ability, and also trimmed his sails to the varying religious breezes so skilfully that he had not only much Church plunder, but a special permit for himself and all at his table to eat meat through Lent or any other Church fast day. Methinks his hospitality must have been put to a considerable strain! His brother, Sir Thomas, who was ambassador to France, succeeded him. But the Hobys ran out long ago, and the Graves of Mickleton, who were also landowners in the adjoining parish, are much more interesting if only for the old Yorkshireman, John Graves, their founder. For Nash gives us an engraving of this old gentleman in his one hundred and third year, the last of his life, and looking exceedingly wideawake. He died in 1616, having risen to fame and wealth by trade in London. His son Richard was a leading haberdasher, and married a squire's daughter. His heir again, squire of Mickleton and Poden in Honeybourne, was a prominent bencher of the Temple, and Clerk of the Peace for Middlesex. A fine man by his portrait, and the father of nineteen

children, the eldest of whom, a daughter, married a grocer, obviously with the blessing of the family, while the second married a great judge's son, and the eldest boy continued here as the squire. The old stone church, though of Early English style, is chiefly remarkable for the before-mentioned graceful octagonal spire. "Church" or "Steeple" Honeybourne is in Worcestershire. It includes, however, a chapelry, rejoicing in the name of Cow Honeybourne, in Gloucestershire, the chapel of which, restored a generation ago, as if in endeavour to live up to its name, was used as a byre and a pigsty. So much, save that the details of the village are not unworthy of its pleasing situation, for ancient Honeybourne. To most people, however, Honeybourne has altogether another and more modern significance as a railroad junction in a region of country whose railroad system seems to consist chiefly of junctions and termini. To glance carelessly at a map of the Avon valley country from Tewkesbury up to Warwick the intending visitor would see a string of fairly important towns, Tewkesbury, Evesham, Stratford, Warwick, extended in a straight line along a valley, and roughly a dozen miles apart, and connected of course by rail. He will doubtless picture himself as running up and down at will between these classic places, allowing say half an hour to each stage, with no doubt an occasional express of greater velocity. I use the road so much myself that I had been some time in the country before realizing that to travel by train from Tewkesbury to Warwick or Rugby meant anything much more than getting in at the one station and out at the other in an hour or two. My eyes were opened by the adventures of a young relative who came to see me at Evesham. Having breakfasted near the source of

the Avon, as it so happened, and caught a quite early train at Northampton, she arrived at Evesham at six, having missed no connexions and made no mistakes, though somewhat exhausted by various long waits. I learned then for the first time that there was a railroad company, working under the title of "East and West" with which in the weeks to come I made acquaintance for the whole or part of the way between Evesham and Stratford. Where it begins and ends I know not. Its business seemed to be to gather you up at one country junction, and in a good-natured leisurely way, accompanied with a quite extraordinary amount of politeness even for English railway officials, to dump you out at another, or occasionally run you in to one or other of the little Avon towns at the opposite end from that at which you had last been deposited. But I should like to say once and for all that though travelling by train quite a little, first and last, between Tewkesbury and Warwick, I soon abandoned all attempts to probe the mysteries of transportation, or to grapple with the various companies who frequently started their train just before that of their rival was due. I simply took my ticket and got in and out at country junctions, or went across to linger at a rival station under the always paternal guidance of the ever amiable officials.

The memories of Honeybourne village beneath the shade of whose tapering spire and peaceful elms I often went and came, are much more endearing than those of Honeybourne Junction. Indeed the two familiar places seem far apart in the mind's eye, and to be wholly disconnected with one another. Surely, the severance between the conventional country station, closely allied to every other one for a hundred miles, and the old-fashioned village in the hollow

below, whose name it bears on a staring board, is a thought that must vaguely float in the minds of most of us in some shape or other? If we know a village pretty well, and then happen on some railroad journey to pull up for a couple of minutes at its station for the first time, how different the impression, how aloof it seems, while the reverse is, of course, equally applicable. I once took a walk between trains from Bletchley Junction, and it seemed almost incredible that a little rural world should be wagging there as elsewhere without a thought of Bradshaw. If these fancies are fantastic and not interchangeable, and so apparently banal, I hope the reader will forgive me. But I cannot think so.

The villages of Bretforton and Badsey have each a fine flavour of past times with which to greet the passing traveller. The small church at Bretforton, felicitously planted on a wide-open sloping graveyard by the road, is worth the trouble of an expedition after the key. Cruciform in shape, it consists of nave, aisles, transepts, north and south porches, and an embattled fifteenth century tower, and displays all styles from Norman to Perpendicular. Within, the rood-loft stairs and doorway are still extant. Round one of the pillars in the north aisle is carved the legend of St. Margaret, "the maid Margery". A nun being tempted of the devil, resists, and is swallowed by him; but, by means of a cross which she bears, Satan is burst asunder and the saint comes out safe and sound. There are also some carved oak stalls brought from Stratford, and some fragments of ancient stained glass in the windows. Just beyond the church is a beautiful early seventeenth century stone manor house close to the road, and well preserved. It occupies the site of a former grange of the

abbots of Evesham. The present house was built by the Cannings, an ancient extinct family whose mural tablets I seem to recall in the church of Ogbourn, St. George, near Marlborough. Still forging onward through the flat fertile plain towards Evesham crops and pasture land, giving way sensibly to the dominant orchard, and the ever-expanding fruit garden, the much larger village of Badsey yields a quite rich collection of old stone houses with mullioned windows, and one remarkable half-timbered, curiously fashioned structure upon the road, used as a barn, which shows conspicuously from many distant points.

Badsey Church has an embattled tower, a nave, chancel, north transept, and south aisle, mostly of the Early English and Perpendicular period. The interior has been so much restored that little of the original seems left. But on the north side of the nave there is a most beautiful Norman door, and a Norman window. Above all there is a mutilated monument to the Hoby family, who included Badsey and Bretforton as well as Honeybourne in their grant.

The remaining two miles to Evesham is a good illustration of how much more prosaic an intensively cultivated fruit country is in the fact than in the fancy. It is economically interesting, no doubt, to see the brand-new red brick houses erected by the successful exponents of this deserving and admirable industry, but there is no part of the vale of Avon, unless it be saved by the fine outlook towards the many distant hills that it affords betimes, which is less picturesque in detail, or more tiresome to travel at the end of a long day.

CHAPTER VII

EVESHAM TO STRATFORD

THE main road from Evesham to Stratford, a matter of some twelve miles, pursues a pleasant undulating course along the low northern slope of the Avon valley, and nowhere much out of touch with that meandering stream. You can row a boat, if you choose, the whole distance, but not without difficulties at more than one spot, over and above the ordinary delays at the various locks. Most of the interesting and picturesque villages, however, which line the valley upon both sides, are set back upon its bordering slopes, or still farther. Some squat upon the highway, others amid the network of flowery lanes with which this country is so abundantly interlaced.

The Avon, too, like all sedate rivers of only moderate size, has its best moments where it forms the foreground to some ancient mill, some many arched and mellow bridge, some hoary church tower, or laves, perchance, the foot of a gracious rectory garden, or wanders as in its higher reaches through the deer park of an old country seat. Here and there, to be sure, as at Cleeve Prior and Fladbury, Nature alone in the guise of hanging woodland, lends it some additional lustre, but all these things can be enjoyed readily from the shore, and the wanderer would gain little and lose much, I think, by selecting the

surface of the river between Evesham and Stratford as his method of progress.

The villages lie upon the roads, and taking the north side of the Avon it would be worth any one's while, with an afternoon to spare, to strike away from the river road after leaving Evesham and make an expedition into the ridgy hills, where, aloof and apart from the world, lie a scattered group of hamlets generically known as the Lenches. The little Norman church at Rouse Lench, with its Rouse monuments may serve as quite sufficient attraction in itself to avert from my head the censure of any reader who might be disposed to think that I had led him astray and beguiled him into a country that has in truth no surpassing attractions. The Lench uplands are neither romantic nor especially picturesque, though in parts well wooded. But they catch the fancy rather by their solitude, amounting almost to melancholy, and their remarkable contrast to the vale of Evesham, on which they seem to turn their back and to have no truck with—a cold, clay country of hill and dale, sparsely occupied and cultivated with the plough by no means on the intensive system.

Five hamlets and villages of microscopic dimensions, all bearing the name of Lench, with a couple of interesting churches between them, contain most of the natives who plough and pasture the hill-sides of this detached region and have no doubt been fixtures here for all time. One might almost fancy it had been a tribal country, and that the people were all descendants or dependents of some ancient chieftain bearing the name of Lench, and descended betimes in predatory fashion upon the plum orchards and cider vats below. This, I admit, was merely a fantastic

notion of my own as I wound my solitary upland way between hedges beautiful in their neglect and over roads upon which no one seemed to travel, and thence passed on from Lenchwick to Sherriff's Lench, and Church Lench, and Hob Lench, by Atch Lench to Rouse Lench, and was there properly amazed, being quite unprepared for the spectacle of a beautiful little Norman church. But the entrance to the Lench country took my fancy not a little for its very contrast to the trim luxuriance of the vale of Evesham. For the way lay up a steep untravelled lonely road where the hedges on either side with ample margin for expansion had been given a free hand for, I should think, half a century—harbourages such as make one feel with thankfulness that wild life even in the Mildands is in no present danger ; bosky mazes of gorse and thorn, of beech and maple, of sloe and brier rose, of elder, oak and ash, all strangled with honeysuckle and convolvuli, with briony and traveller's joy. There was a wide weedy margin, too, along this road, stiff with common wild flowers and radiant with their bloom, the purple willow herb, as almost always in this country, predominant among them. What snug havens of refuge for vermin, or for every wild thing on wings or legs, the hawk-hunted bird, the scattered partridge, are these long abandoned fences on a little travelled road! A rugged, red-stemmed old Scotch fir stood erect and alone here and there against the sky, like a straggler from some distant wild who had found a spot more suited to his mood than he might reasonably have expected in the cheerful country below and stuck to it. No motors affright the linnets and finches, the yellowhammers, blackbirds, and thrushes from these snug, tangled hedges ; nor do the hill-men themselves, seem much of travellers nor greatly given

to leaving the high-lying clay fallows of their native and respective Lenches.

Church Lench, which lies in the heart of the district, has a very fair Early English church, a good deal restored, but pleasantly up-raised amid a well-kept graveyard entered by a good lych-gate. But Rouse Lench, just beyond on the north edge of the district and some seven miles from Evesnam, as already remarked, is the gem of the tribe. You descend upon it from the comparative highlands by a deep-sunk lane which skirts the grounds of the ancient hall of the Rouses. Originally a Tudor house, it has been added to in the same style within the last half-century, and a fine half-timbered gatehouse overlooking the deep narrow lane comes as a surprise. The church stands just below at the foot of the long sweep of park on the summit of which perches the court, beneath whose roof Robert Baxter, a native of Worcestershire, is said to have written one at least of his books, and Cromwell to have spent the night prior to the battle of Worcester: for the Rouses were staunch Parliamentarians. The name is a corruption of Rufus, John of that name being the first owner of the property by a direct grant from Henry III. In 1721 Rouses were still here, Sir Thomas of that name in the direct succession then dying, after which it passed through two collateral branches, the second one—the Boughton Rouses—disposing of it only about thirty years ago. It is not often a landowner as late as Henry III fastens his name on a parish already rejoicing in a fixed one which in this case, according to Domesday entries, was Randulph Lench (or Lenz).

The church is an exceedingly perfect specimen of early twelfth century Norman work, containing nave, chancel, north aisle, and the Rouse chapel, a modern

addition. The chancel arch and those of the three bays of the north aisle are semicircular, while two richly moulded Norman doorways survive on both the south and north of the nave. The seventeenth century Rouse monuments, however, are perhaps the most interesting features of the church, being not merely good work, but some of them quaint and unusual. On one altar tomb repose the effigies of Edward Rouse (1611) and his wife, the former in black doublet and trunk hose ; while their four kneeling children, adults, depicted on the panels, are clad in deep mourning, which in the case of the three daughters takes the unusual form in sculpture of black bonnets and black dresses. The son here represented as a mourner has in addition a monument to himself. He was that Parliamentarian Rouse who figures conspicuously in the Civil War records of Worcestershire, though as a politician rather than a warrior. He was caught by the Royalists, however, here in his own garden, and sent to Warwick where he died. There is also a gorgeous and fantastic marble monument to a lady of the family, fashioned with that wealth of imagination which in the reign of Queen Anne and later speeded the parting souls of the well-endowed to realistically aerial spheres. The lady is seated in the front of an urn (not at tea), while behind is a medallion of her husband contemplating her from among a company of cherubs.

The churchyard at Rouse Lench is so immaculately kept and so adorned by recent planting, the church itself so scrupulously tended inside and out, that its very antiquity is at first sight rather obscured. The little village at its gates, lying in the shadow of big elms, is also swept and garnished and obviously the object of much benignant solicitude, differing vastly in this respect from its fellow Lenches in the hills

behind, which, though in no wise unkempt, suggest at any rate no such fostering care. With the confidence of a fairly wide experience I had counted on Rouse Lench for some midday refreshment, and at an already belated hour discovered not merely that no facilities of the humblest kind existed in the place, but that the parish, or at least those responsible for it, prided themselves in an absence of anything of the sort. This was cruel, but in a little book dealing with the district thirty years ago, that fell unawares into my hands, I read that even then there was no house of entertainment in any of the Lenches, a fact to which its author, rubbing in a moral, attributed all the virtues apparently possessed by the inhabitants. Let us hope they still maintain that standard. So, pushing on with feelings not wholly amiable towards Rouse Lench, I struck the Alcester and Worcester road at a bleak and desolate-looking stage where, like a beacon-light, a lonely tavern broke the solitude, the proprietor of which was evidently almost as pleased to see me as I was to discover him and his primitive resources. And as I tested these with uncritical heartiness, mine host entertained me unawares by an animated discussion with the driver of a baker's cart, whose horse grazed in the meantime in an absent-minded manner some hundred or two yards up the fence side, on the respective batting merits of the Foster brothers. It is to be doubted if all the Rouses, whose silent, life-like effigies I had just been contemplating, ever acquired such fame in Worcestershire as this family of batsmen.

To return, however, to the river road between Evesham and Stratford, Norton is the first village encountered, and it enlists your sympathy at once by the long row of old black-and-white cottages, some of them with carved gables that abut on the road and

are the main part as well as the chief feature of the village. Abbots Norton is the full title, derived of course from its intimate ancient association with Evesham Abbey. The church has been badly restored, and is in itself undistinguished, but contains nevertheless some very fine old monuments to the Bigg family who, when the distribution of church lands was going forward, were renowned for their sound Protestantism and attachment to Henry VIII. Thomas Bigg, who lies in full armour upon an altar tomb of the year 1581, married Maulden, the sister of that other staunch Protestant who profited much in this neighbourhood, Sir Thomas Hoby. And she lies beside her husband who travelled abroad, we are here told, and won the notice of emperors. Another Thomas Bigg, but a knight, kneels facing his lady, a Throckmorton, over a praying desk upon a second altar tomb close by, with emblazoned panels and crowded with the children of this obviously fruitful union. Above the pair is a canopy rich with the heraldic honours of the Biggs and their allies. Upon a third tomb of marble and alabaster lies a third Bigg, proclaiming the progressing honours of the family, as a knight baronet. He lies alone, though compensated for his solitude by a greater splendour of panelling and canopy even than the others. For his wife put it up to him and then married again. But this last Bigg sold the manor of Abbots Norton to the Wiltshire Seymours, Dukes of Somerset, and it went with the duke's daughter to a London merchant whom she married. Norton is now the property of the French Royal family under the Legitimist faith, who, in the person of the Duc d'Orleans, is an admirable English landlord. But the rigid observance of the forms of royalty which is, I believe, regarded as essential, prevents the part from

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being played in social matters upon the lines of an English nobleman. In Norton Church, too, there is a marble lectern which was unearthed among the remains of Evesham Abbey.

A mile or so on, with the Avon running now and then at an unwonted pace away on the right but not appreciably our companion, the little village of Harvington charms the eye with another picture of half-timbered houses lifted picturesquely above a steep pitch and turn in the road, among a blaze of cottage gardens sobered by the shade of stately elms. On the river, too, below Harvington is one of those ancient paved fords which Mr. Quinton's brush has here happily reproduced. Not far from it is a weir with its sighing willows and whispering reeds, into which the waters, driving before the force of their recent tumble, make continual stir and, with the rustling of the summer wind, a pleasant harmony.

But Salford Priors, the next village to Harvington on the Stratford road, and the first in Warwickshire to greet the pilgrim from the west bound for the national shrine, does that county credit, though part of its undeniable charm is derived from the high quality of the Avon scenery in its immediate neighbourhood and the delightful walk over the meadows to Cleeve Mill. Salford Priors would scarcely, I think, earn a second glance in winter-time from the passing traveller. How much of Warwickshire would do so? To the lover of English scenery it is as essentially a summer county as in the minds of the smart hunting world it is a winter one. This is by no means to overlook the beauties of detail in an English winter landscape. I trust we all recognize them, though to express such a wish is, after all, mere cant. For we know perfectly well that there are thousands of quite intelligent and

sensitive souls who feel the delights of a summer landscape in their very marrow, but have no joy whatever in a normal winter scene. Nor will all the indefatigable essayists of the Press, who try so hard through the dark months to convert their public to an appreciation of an ordinary country-side in winter, make, I fear, much impression, let their discourse be never so eloquent on pearly grey skies, the delicate tracery of the naked elm, the red thongs of the willow, the tawny beauties of withered reeds. This is too meticulous for the majority of people who feel the luxuriance, the colouring of summer, its sparkle and sunshine in their very blood and bones. It is of no use : they do not care for sodden fields whether ploughed or in grass, for naked hedges or leafless woods, and the brimming turgid stream chills them the more. Now winter among the moors, the mountains, or the downs is almost as stimulating as summer even to the uncritical eye. The fen country or Romney Marsh has at least the obvious appeal of spacious solitude to many who have nevertheless little use for the ordinary enclosed low-country landscape on dull winter days, and of such beyond any quibbling is Warwickshire and more than half of England. It is luxuriant or nothing. The picturesque village, in which the western and southern parts of the county particularly, like their neighbours, greatly excel, loses much more than half its charm, when the flowers and vines are dead, when the thatch is sodden, the walls damp and moisture exudes from the muddy street. One thing, however, an English winter enjoys which no other country can boast of, though perhaps the English eye, inured to it and conceiving of nothing else, gets little satisfaction therefrom, and that is the green carpet of turf, only less green than in its matchless summer dress,

which still clothes the land and still glows, if with modified glory, when winter suns deign to shine. But to the alien from almost any country, above all to the American, accustomed to see all colour vanish from the pastures with the first hard frost, this is a spectacle of rare delight, unexpected, inconceivable. And Warwickshire can show more of this velvet carpet in winter than most counties, though not so much as some. But this scarcely counts with an Englishman, who is so used to it, that he often lives and dies unaware that Great Britain has one priceless winter beauty that no other country which in any way approximates to its seasons has any approach to, while those of the tropical or Sunny South variety have of course no greensward worthy of the name.

But for an Englishman who has never lived abroad long enough to don at will the spectacles of an alien, and looks upon fresh green turf as earth's normal covering, Warwickshire is most essentially a summer country, offering nothing at all in winter that you might not find in any part of those English counties whose scenery is of the low-pitched and domestic order. Being Shakespeare's county it has suffered a good deal, like Devonshire for less obvious reasons, from undue idealization. It is also geographically the heart of England, a situation which conduces to sentiment. One of course makes infinite allowance for the writer who is enlarging upon his native county. But when I opened a recent book on Warwickshire and read in the opening paragraph that it was " pre-eminently a county of hills and purling streams ", it was impossible to resist the conclusion that the ecstatic native had lost both his sense of proportion and his sense of humour. There are hills, unquestionably, in Warwickshire, neither more nor less than there are in its neighbours

of Leicester, Northants, Oxford, and Bedford, on the one side, but in no wise comparable to those of its immediate neighbours on the other. Its not very numerous or conspicuous streams undoubtedly relax at times from the normal sluggishness of Midland brooks. But what a description in brief of one of the forty-four counties that include, let us say, Cumberland, Yorkshire, and Devon! Another more or less local enthusiast but well-known writer, who really ought to know better, informed the readers of a popular magazine the other day that a majority of persons throughout England would unquestionably put their own county first and Warwickshire second! This on the principle, one may suppose, that the average person is as obsessed of his own surroundings and as devoid of discernment in a most interesting topic as a writer who could quite seriously put such nonsense about his own county in print, as if imparting a recognized fact to innocent dwellers in towns and suburbs! For one thing, it is quite obvious that people who write in such a strain of scenes like this, and there are numbers of them, have no intimacy with the northern and western temperament as regards landscape. They do not understand how the limitations of what may be called domestic English scenery depress it, nor how difficult it is for those habituated by uprearing or residence to the more uplifted counties to see eye to eye with those whose standards are different, and who cannot even imagine the temperament that absolutely demands for its satisfaction certain leading elements in landscape which about two-thirds of the counties of England entirely lack. Inadequately these elements might be indicated as hills high enough to touch the imagination, the presence of frequent and stirring waters, and of interludes of

solitude intermingled with or adjacent to the tame. In such counties there is a racier atmosphere. Their traditions are more inspiring, or at least more in evidence. The native of such regions never gets really reconciled to the low-lying, domestic scenery of England. All of it is beautiful, thanks mainly in these lower counties to the manner in which man has treated it during the last two or three centuries.

The cult of a particular region may be pursued by a resident or constant visitor till he becomes so enamoured of it that he mistakes the endearments of association and charms that he could find almost anywhere under the same conditions for a quite special achievement of nature. Warwickshire is not only the worthy cult of the native who loves it and writes of it often in a strain misleading to outsiders, but it has suffered no little, like Devonshire, which it resembles in no other respect, from the elementary gush of the artless and the geographically restricted. Stratford, for one thing, thanks mainly to our American visitors, has made it somewhat the fashion, while identical districts adjoining it still suffer from the reputation for scenic deficiency that Warwickshire also most unquestionably enjoyed when I was young.

Now the Avon rises in Northamptonshire and in its infancy flows through a portion of that county of squires, spires, and mires (though drainage has long banished the last and bad times, and taxation very nearly exterminated the first) which I happen to know tolerably well for the best of reasons. And furthermore the grass country about Brixworth, Guilsborough, and again towards Crick, all in Northamptonshire, is unsurpassed for shapely outline and peaceful luxuriance and fine timber anywhere in the Midlands. So far from being low-pitched and monotonous in

contour, some of the hills upon the highway in west Northants are not merely long but marked "Dangerous". The heights of Crick, through which burrows the longest tunnel in England, that of Kilsby, look down on the plains of Warwickshire and the course of the Upper Avon from an elevation of some 600 feet. But I will undertake to say, or what is much more to the point, a London house agent, as I have some reason for knowing, will tell you at once that a country rectory or its equivalent, advertised for a summer holiday "let" in the uninspiring low-pitched country about Rugby would command respectful attention from a stranger, whereas an equally eligible domicile ten or fifteen miles away in the cream of Midland scenery would receive no consideration. This is because the former is in Warwickshire and the latter is in Northamptonshire, and it is very funny but quite characteristic of the British public. The outside reputation of Northants, as every one who lives in it and goes at all about the world knows well, is in the matter of scenery deplorable. Great as it is with the hunting man and the ecclesiologist, the birth-county of the Avon is otherwise taboo. Warwickshire used to go with it, but has long emerged and been promoted in the scale, even to being labelled, as I have already said, however extravagantly, the most beautiful county in England. This too is unjust to Northamptonshire, since, taken as a whole, the two may be bracketed together with less hesitation than perhaps any other neighbouring counties. But Shakespeare was born in Warwickshire, and to this quite irrelevant fact the physical exaltation of one at the expense of the other is unquestionably due. Even the Baconian, we feel sure, would follow up the advertisement of the house in Warwickshire, shocked as he might be to realize precisely why he

did so, while wholly rejecting the notion of a holiday in Northants. Till near the end of the eighteenth century the well-groomed and smoother counties of England stood beyond doubt for the highest expression of natural beauty. North Wales, in the language of a seventeenth century explorer, was " a horrid spot of hills ". Men had been surfeited with wild nature, its swamps, tangled woods, unreclaimed common, and obstructing hills, difficult then of passage. The smooth, drained pasture land, the heavier and cleaner grain crops of vastly improved farming, the green sweep of parkland, the handsome mansion in the Italian style—all these delighted them. The nature poet liked a grotto, overlooking an artificial lake with deer feeding in a park upon the farther bank. He liked, too, to turn his eyes occasionally over the " teeming plain," the ripening grain, the grazing bullocks, the tapering spires, the thatched villages (of doubtful artistic appeal, however, to his eyes), sheltering, as it pleased him to think, "contented swains". He admired this, of which Warwickshire had abundance, as we admire it, in a different fashion. We are the products of a congested country or an over-elaborate civilization. For the last century or more, though we admire the ornate, we have most of us longed for, and most of us sought, the wild, the uplifted, and the less trim. But, to the Georgian, the triumph of art over a ragged England was too recent for what some one has termed the " call of the wild " to have much significance to generations who were only emerging from it. One hears, too, a great deal of the forests. Your Warwickshire *vates sacer* will tell you, and with truth, how the forest of Arden and others locked their boughs so closely over a large portion of the county that a squirrel could travel across it without touching the ground.

The inference is, and is intended, that this was a condition peculiar to Warwickshire, and is a picturesque point for the visitor. "Shakespeare's green wood" makes a nice-sounding phrase, but as a matter of fact it was common to many counties. Worcestershire, North Wilts, Sussex, and others possessed similar forests offering the same facilities to the squirrel, and are still fond of recalling it by means of the same idiom. One must not forget, too, the extraordinary change that has overtaken the open landscape of England since Shakespeare's day, a change that may be said to have virtually created much of the particular form of beauty that distinguishes the Midlands. Let us try to imagine a patchwork of a hundred or so acres round the village in small plots of, to modern notions, incredibly attenuated crops of grain, relieved scarcely at all by the blossom-laden hedges as we know them. A hay meadow here and there, but all the rest of the country not afforested, a ragged pasture, rich or poor, drained or undrained, as nature made it; tufted with scrub or thickets and picked over by stunted cattle and sheep that would appal a modern farmer and any American, unless indeed he were familiar with the old broomsedge regions of Virginia and the Carolinas, where may be seen to-day their precise counterparts as well as the five or six bushels of wheat to the acre that represented the Shakespearean crop. This dishevelled infertility will not have detracted from the landscape of bolder counties to anything like the same extent as the Midlands. And yet further, in regard to our American visitors, England, it must be said again, looks quite different in their eyes, till long habit has dulled the early impressions, from what it appears in those of the native. Ordinary, normal, gracious, ornate England is what in the main

delights an American for reasons obvious enough to any one who has at any time lived long enough in America to understand what England looks like to a stranger. Our picturesque regions are and should be, for them, secondary and deferred indulgences. And no part of England is better calculated to furnish the smooth velvety surface, the lush hedgerows, the old-fashioned villages, the grey church towers, the ancient farm and manor houses, than the Midlands of which Warwickshire is the heart. We in England, unless we live in a town, look upon these things every day of our lives, and they are as nothing. The untravelled native, which may in this sense include the occasional visitor to the Continent, accepts them as the ordinary covering of the earth's surface. By no process can he imagine how novel and delightful these common everyday things look to transatlantic eyes, nor merely those of the man of taste and culture, but even of the plain, unlettered store-keeper on a Cook's ticket. Englishmen are constantly expressing surprise at these raptures. They understand those directed to the old buildings, the churches, and castles. But most of them know enough of America to realise that the people of the old States, at any rate, emerged from the woods a very long time ago and must have lived in the presence of pastures and meadows, grain-fields, highways, fences, homesteads, and the other accessories of normal rural life, all their lives, which is undoubtedly a fact. It is also another that the country which many of our visitors are in the habit of seeing around their homes is approximately as clean and tidy, as substantially built upon, covered with virtually the same crops, laid out too in fields of the English pattern and size and diversified with about the same amount of woodland, not differing seriously in ingredients from

our own—in short, from Eastern Canada inclusive to Maryland, the same material civilization, minus the architectural antiquities that distinguish the country through which the Avon flows, exist in America. Nor is this American rural civilization by any means always that of yesterday. A good deal of it is on foundations laid in the seventeenth century, when Warwickshire bore very little resemblance to the picture which ravishes the descendant of the original emigrant to-day. But with all this an English landscape, even apart from buildings, differs absolutely from the other, as indeed it differs from all or almost all others in the world. Yet this quality and prodigious contrast is practically indescribable. The ablest Americans have attempted over and over again to express in print their first impressions of England. But I think it may fairly be said that they have done little to mitigate the shock of delighted surprise that their countryman, possessed of an eye to see and a heart to feel, experiences on his first introduction to the real thing. It is therefore a happy circumstance that Shakespeare was born in Warwickshire, and that the faithful pilgrim to his shrine from beyond the seas should concurrently make acquaintance with the part of England that is at least as good for his purposes as any that he could select, and better than most. In the interest of historic truth, however, he must remember that when he is looking over modern Warwickshire he is not looking upon the rural Warwickshire that Shakespeare knew, or, save for the contour of the ground, anything like it. It is possible that nineteen Englishmen out of twenty may need this painful reminder fully as much.

Salford, where we came to a halt so many pages back, it may be for that very reason necessary to repeat, is

one of the pleasantest spots in Warwickshire, coming back to one as a small group of cheerful dwellings of all degrees standing in roomy enclosures on either side of the road ; a fine old church with a bowery parsonage set close at hand in a meadow, and a delightful walk through green hedge-bordered pastures to the prettiest of all the Warwickshire reaches of the Avon. The name is derived from a salt spring that once bubbled up in the village. The manor was part of the spoils snatched by the Crown from the abbey of Evesham, and eventually went to help in paying the debts of that unattractive pedant, the first James. Among the subsequent owners are the well-known Warwickshire family of Skipwith, whose monuments, with others, may be seen in the church. But the property has long been absorbed in the great estates of the Marquis of Hertford, whose mansion and park of Ragley is but a few miles distant, near Alcester. The church is well placed and interesting above the common, numbering among its treasures a beautifully moulded Norman doorway, a Norman nave, and a thirteenth century chancel. Besides a good tower at the west end there is a small sexagonal one with image niches and gargoyles abutting on the exterior of the south aisle, which attracts the eye at once, and is in part very early work. Grotesque gargoyles too are conspicuous on the tower and elsewhere, representing men and birds and griffins.

The half-mile walk to Cleeve Mill from Salford always comes back to me with little effort, and in a somewhat crowded mental gallery is always welcome. Possibly one was in a mood to enjoy small things, for it was a sunny August afternoon, and a light breeze played in the luxuriant straggling hedges, through which the pleasant springy pathway, trodden by

sanguine anglers, pushed on towards the woody height above the river, where the warm wind danced among a myriad leaves. This is the Marle cliff which, wooded below and bare above, rises to a considerable height. But at the mill at the foot of the cliff, girdled about with forest trees, the scene was charming ; a sparkling weir of sloping rugged stones, crossed by a long bridge of a single plank, a plunging mill-stream and a fine dance and swirl of water below among little islands tufted with willows and rushes, displaying a beautiful glimpse of a still reach overhung with foliage. Above the mill and the weir and all the lively stir of waters a long, silent deep stretches towards Bidford, over which more woods throw their shadows. Climbing the steep hill beyond the river, where an old monolith squats by the road, a short walk brings one to Cleeve Prior, and once again on to Worcestershire soil.

Five hundred feet above the Severn valley, on the long high plateau above the Avon known as Cleeve Hill—not to be confounded with the much loftier Cotswold height above Cheltenham—stands the church and village of Cleeve Prior, as satisfactory a termination to a summer afternoon's stroll, adventured from Salford, where there is a station, as could be desired. For at Cleeve Prior there is almost everything that makes for the ideal village. A small Tudor house of forlorn and unprotected aspect set by the road, seems to tell some uncommon story at the very entrance ; but all I could make of it was its occupation by the same old lady for three hundred and three years, as witnessed by a tomb in the churchyard, which placed the matter of course beyond dispute.

There is something of a village green too, shaded by a single great oak with vast but hollow trunk. Low-browed cottages stand flush with the green, or with-

CLEEVE MILL AND WEIR

draw enticingly behind small leafy gardens where the lusty growth of some box trees has tempted an owner here and there to topiary decoration. You may refresh yourself at the " King's Arms ", a village inn of extraordinary antiquity, said to be in great part of the fourteenth century and looking credibly so. The church, with lofty embattled tower, stands precisely where it should in a village that has slowly and fortuitously grouped itself with the centuries into the happy disposal of its body and limbs, as if arranged to sit for its picture by some painter of judgment and discretion. The church has a tower, a nave, and a chancel, with a modern south transept of brick. There are two Norman doorways in the nave, with some good Early English windows and a decorated but restored chancel. Across a meadow behind the church, screened by high trees and luxuriant garden foliage, and its front door approached through a wicket in a low old wall, between most quaintly clipped and lofty yew hedges, is a beautiful little Tudor manor house. This puts the finishing touch, as it were, to as happy a picture of an old English village as one might wish to enjoy a well-earned tea in of a summer afternoon. Talking of the Enclosure Acts, which incidentally contributed so much to the beauty of modern England, Americans might care to know that this parish of Cleeve Prior was legally handed over to hedgerows and improved farming in the year of the Declaration of Independence.

The Icknield way, the chief Roman road of all this country, runs a direct course through the parish as a modern road from south to north crossing the Avon at the large village of Bidford, the next point on the river above Cleeve Mill. It is not, therefore, surprising that a goodly store of Roman coins and many fragments of armour and other relics have been from time to

time unearthed about Cleeve Prior, suggesting the probability that there was a small Roman station here.

But before going eastward again into Warwickshire and Stratford way, there are the three Worcestershire Littletons lying in a group a mile or two beyond Cleeve Prior; villages quite off the main track but immediately on the path of such more enterprising pilgrims as might be disposed to journey back to Evesham from Salford station, on the southern side of the Avon. The few parishes here between the Avon and Honeybourne and the villages along the foot of the first rise of the Cotswolds are threaded by many lanes; not deep tortuous ones that bury you more or less as you travel, but narrow roads rather, of a good surface, and wonderfully generous margin, abandoned to a profuse tangle of flowers and foliage, that are a delight in themselves and save the otherwise uneventful byway from ever palling on the most leisurely progress along it. One that I followed on several occasions along the edge of these sequestered parishes in July and August always abides with me. I think it was a section of the old Icknield way just alluded to. But no matter, it always had for me at least a curious fascination, not readily imparted; possibly a fanciful and capricious one, but if so, one may always be thankful by the winter fireside for such fancies and such caprices. It ran for nearly a mile from one cross-road to another with almost the precision, as it seemed in the pursuit of it, of a ruled line. Ordinary grass-fields with intervals of seeds or tillage here and there lay on either hand. Neither farmhouse nor cottage nor any sign of humanity sat either upon it or within sight, while the languor of high summer resting heavily upon its exuberant growths in field and hedgerow

and roadside suggested the spirit of solitude under an aspect one is hardly accustomed to look for it. It was not till the second or third occasion of making its acquaintance that the consistently secluded qualities of this old Roman road, if such it were, began to seize my fancy and thenceforward to draw me more than once out of the ordinary route for the mere gratification of treading its untravelled and flower-margined surface. In mediaeval times we know that highways were by law 70 yards wide, partly as a precaution against the predatory individuals who infested them, and partly, no doubt, as now in the more backward old States of America which have scarcely even yet begun road-making, that water-logged or impassable tracks may be temporarily abandoned for new ones. But neither cause, it would be irrelevant to remark, is the occasion of the wide grassy margins that are so often found on both highways and byways in the Midlands; more particularly on the former, where the grass for many reasons is not greatly invaded by the products of the neighbouring hedgerows. But here in these silent byways, where no strings of horses are cantered by grooms, where no gipsies camp, nor cows graze, the occasional grassy margin becomes a gorgeous tangle. On this particular mile of unfrequented road every tree and flower in the whole flora of the west Midlands must in their due season surely find a place. Full-grown trees were scarce, and on this account no doubt the sunshine has the better germinated this mile-long strip of Nature's garden. In the hedgerow, willows unpruned this many a year though once pollarded, and ash trees spreading in fan-shaped fashion, made a lofty screen, till some tangle of elm and hazel, of maple, elder, thorn, beech, and sloe took up the tale. And with these in confusion blended,

spreading out and poaching on the grassy margin of the road, were gorse and broom, and brier-roses and blackberries, while over all the honeysuckle and the traveller's joy lay in endless festoons. In their intervals and in the broad edging of tangled grass yet left by the roadside came the flowers, the willow herb, as ever in the parts to the front, loose-strife and the wild vetch, convolvuli, scabious, with yarrow, corn-cockles and the golden ragwort, while here and there in a damper spot the ivory tassels of the fragrant meadow-sweet scented the air. That all the birds in the neighbourhood seemed to have gathered to this quiet harbourage by a roadside which no one seemed to travel, and furnished such a harvest of seed and fruit and berry, was natural enough. And among the clatter of blackbirds, thrushes, and starlings, and the commoner members of the smaller tribes, a green woodpecker would occasionally jerk away with his hoarse note of alarm, or even a jay or two, tempted from the security of some neighbouring woodland. And there was nearly always a covey of early hatched partridges dusting somewhere on the narrow road. I remember, too, on the back of an ancient cowshed, the only building anywhere in evidence, a printed notice-board, cracked and stained with age, threatening, on behalf of proprietors long dead, dire retribution against potential poachers and trespassers that must also have been mouldering in their graves for a generation. There is something pathetic about these time-eaten, weather-stained, half-legible notice-boards that here and there in remote spots have escaped destruction; their faded and truculent threats seem so eloquent of another age and so grimly suggestive of Botany Bay and days long before the shadow of the coming cataclysm had begun to darken the pathway of the

squire. When land was a power, enviable and unassailable, and everything was snug—except the wages of the agricultural labourer, to whom the snaring of a rabbit must have been as irresistible a temptation in the face of his nine shillings a week and hungry family as was ever set daily before the eyes of half-fed human beings. This condition of things seems all the stranger now when the rabbit has dropped out of favour in the serious sportsman's estimate, and professional trappers for curtailing their numbers are in such great demand.

Of the three Littletons, North, Middle, and South, the two latter only have churches, both of which are interesting. It may be worth noting in connexion with a family so vigorous for many centuries in Worcestershire, and never more conspicuous in the world's eye than now, that the Littletons derived their name from these villages, being landowners here, though apparently never residents, before they went to Frankly in the fifteenth century. Middle-Littleton Church, where there is nothing of a village, is a quite striking cruciform building, but with a very short south transept. Like most of the churches in this region it is a blend of periods from Norman to Perpendicular. It has an embattled west tower, while the south transept is a chapel erected in the fifteenth century by Thomas Smith, whose family for some generations flourished here " under license of my Lord Abbot of Evesham ", to which monastery the manor belonged. The nave is Early English and embellished with some good three-light and two-light trefoil windows. There are also some fourteenth century tiles and some curiously carved oak pews. But the wonder of Middle Littleton is the immense fourteenth century tithe barn built by Abbot Ombersley of Evesham for the use of the abbey. It is 150 feet long, with a roof supported by massive timbers.

while the walls are strengthened outside by heavy stone buttresses. It stands near the church in the outer yard of a large farm, the house of which suggests in itself a Tudor origin.

But in South Littleton, just beyond which is something of a village, though not a large one, there is a spectacle fronting on the street, the like of which I am quite sure you might search all England for in vain. This is the former residence of the magnates of the parish, consisting of a very complete specimen of Queen Anne mansion of date 1727, united as an addition to an Elizabethan house, a singular and ill-assorted union of two totally different styles, both admirable of their kind. The Queen Anne portion, too, is of red brick, with the characteristic broad chimneys and large dormer windows, while the other is of grey stone with the numerous sharp gables and casement windows of the two preceding centuries. Thrust right on to the village street, with sombre overgrown box trees filling part of the narrow interval, more than half the large windows and all the dormers of the untenanted Queen Anne portion are bricked or boarded up, and there is almost an uncanny air about this fine relic of the days of Walpole and the days of Raleigh respectively. The villagers, whom I addressed upon the subject, said it had been like this ever since they could remember, and knew nothing more except that it was for sale. Nash, writing in 1775, says nothing of the house, though something of successive squires, its owners. The church stands raised up in a picturesque graveyard sloping from the village street, and has a low western tower with nave, chancel, south porch, and north chapel, and, like its neighbour, is of all styles, but otherwise of no particular interest.

PEBWORTH

Immediately adjoining the Littletons on the east or Stratford side, and keeping to the south of the Avon, is a group of what may be called Shakespeare villages —Pebworth, Long Marston, and Welford. These are all, by the way, in Gloucestershire, which drives a wedge right up to Stratford and fronts on the Avon for some miles. Warwickshire, through the mouth of its many prophets, has been singularly successful in disseminating the impression that Stratford lies in the heart of the county, that in short it is Warwickshire of Warwickshire, whereas it is within a mile or two of being outside the county altogether. Shakespeare's associations must in actual fact have been very largely blended with the counties of Worcester and Gloucester. Everybody knows the number of little local adventures with which the Bard of Avon is credited, none of them in any way of an elevating nature, but rather calculated to make sport for the Baconian and the agnostic. A familiar quatrain anent a group of villages to the west of Stratford is even attributed to Shakespeare himself: "Piping Pebworth, Dancing Marston, Haunted Hillborough, and Hungry Grafton", with "Dodging Exhall, Papist Wixford, Beggarly Broom, and Drunken Bidford". It is said that after a drinking bout at Bidford, where we shall shortly be, the poet, homeward bound, extended himself beneath a crab tree for the night, and when the cold dews of morning brought a headache and repentance, he indicated in these uncomplimentary terms the various villages whence his boon-companions hailed. "Piping" Pebworth stands upon the brow and slopes of a leafy knoll, crowned by a fine old church with wide-spreading well-filled graveyard, and consists of tower, nave, chancel, and a broad south aisle. The nave arcade is Norman, and there are

several Norman, as well as Early English, Decorated and Perpendicular windows. There is a row, too, of dormers in the roof which has a curious effect. Marston, whose epithet seems to have been earned by its ancient propensity for Morris dancing, spreads along the flat a mile or two beyond; a long straight road where the cottages stand in gardens and orchards at easy intervals, with a timber house or two of greater pretensions blinking from among neighbouring groves. A small church at a cross-road sprang at this season from a tall crop of grass long gone to seed and, when I saw it, entirely concealing most of the headstones and monuments of the village fathers.

There is an old endowed grammar school here, too, a singularly inapt site nowadays for an institution that has presumably to lean for support upon the day boy.

I took my lunch at the rustic inn on last passing through Marston. It was a holiday of some kind. The Old Age Pension Bill had been defined in the House, I think, the day before, and a village parliament sat in judgment upon it and entertained me nobly while I refreshed myself. The gratification of some was tempered by the anticipation of others, correct as it proved, that tobacco and beer would have in part to pay for it. The Marston people get their drinking water from ponds in their gardens, and the frog, I was informed, played a lively and conspicuous part in the domestic vessels. At the end of the village is the house where Charles the Second, during his adventures after his flight from Worcester, helped the farmer's wife in her operations with such small success. Bidford, however, drunken Bidford, is the most important of the group, and this brings us again across the river and into Warwickshire. Bidford Bridge, though patched with brick, is mainly of stone, and is singu-

larly unconventional, almost every one of its eight arches differing from its neighbour. The buttresses are massive, and the date remote, probably fifteenth century. It was repaired at one time with stones from the dismantled priory at Alcester, and like most of the Avon bridges was broken down during the Civil War, as more than one skirmish was fought here.

Altogether Bidford Bridge is among the best on a river rich in bridges. The village, which is on the north bank, is a large one, after the style rather of a miniature town, a long street of houses closely packed together. It presents a more picturesque appearance from the summit of the hill upon the Stratford road, whence you descend upon it, or again from the opposite bank of the river than when actually in its streets. The church, however, stands well up, with a graveyard sloping to the river, and has a curious tower with an expanding base and a projecting stair turret at one of the angles which overtops the battlements. The body of the church has been rebuilt save for an Early English chancel lit on either side by trefoil-headed windows. A monument and bust within, of date 1655, to Dorothy Skipwith, reminds one that the manor belonged to this still well-known Warwickshire family. Much more curious though would seem the fact that it belonged at one time to Griffith ap Llewelyn, Prince of North Wales, though, as a present from King John, the little mystery vanishes when one remembers that his stepmother Joan was that King's daughter.

Fronting the church is a large stone Tudor building with mullioned windows, filling now some modest function, but once the "Falcon Inn", where well-known but vague tradition credits Shakespeare with having encountered in a drinking-bout the champions of the

various villages, on which by a still vaguer one he revenged himself by the jingle already quoted. A hotel on the river, a beer garden, and every accommodation, including boats for giving the Joes and Jills of Birmingham a happy day, keeps Bidford from feeling dull. Even apart from this the place is scarcely one of those villages that even by frequent traversing grow in one's affections or leave any enduring impression on the mind. Welford, however, some four miles up, is a very different matter. Mr. Quinton's brush makes any enlargement upon the delightful scene that opens to the visitor approaching it from below the weir superfluous. The village itself is not unworthy of its river foreground with its thatched cottages, embowered in creepers and planted for the most part in gardens gay with flowers and fruit. A notable feature of Welford is its old painted maypole, which, set on a bank, towers 75 feet in height, and is coloured in stripes of red, blue, and white. This reminds the local patriot that Shakespeare makes Hermia call Helena in "Midsummer Night's Dream" a painted maypole, a reminder which leads up to the reflection that the Welford Maypole, situated in Gloucestershire by the way, is probably a successor to one that stood there in the poet's day. The church is not without interest, and has some good Norman arches in the nave.

Between Bidford and Welford stands near the bank of the river an old ivy-clad house of Tudor origin named Hillborough Manor, the "Haunted Hillborough" of the jingle, so absurdly fastened on Shakespeare. About a mile above Welford, the river all this time pursuing a meadowy course, marked for the most part by willows, is crossed by a curious double stone bridge of thirteen arches, resting its centre on a leafy

THE OLD FALCON INN, BIDFORD

island. Near the end of it is an ancient tavern, bearing the somewhat infrequent sign of the "Four Alls". On the northern side of the river are several villages distinguished for pleasant unalloyed rusticity and containing no little good work in their churches.

Exhall, for instance, has a Norman doorway and a thirteenth century chancel, Wicksford a Norman doorway, part of a rood screen with some ancient glass and interesting old monuments. At Temple Grafton the church has been recently rebuilt, which is regrettable, since it seems almost certain that it was in the old church of this picturesquely seated village that William Shakespeare was wedded to Ann Hathaway. At any rate, what appears almost certainly to be their marriage entry was found on the Worcester register.

I need hardly say that I do not propose to enter here into the boundless controversies that rage around the shadowy association of Shakespeare with the various districts around his native town. Enough to fill volumes has been written upon the scanty tags and fragments of evidence that unfortunately are all that we have to stimulate the fancy in the neighbourhood upon which his great name has shed such lustre. Eliminating Shakespeare there can, I think, be little doubt but that the wanderer, with a fair knowledge of England and her scenery, would begin to think that the Avon had given him of her best, both in her own stream and their environment as he drew near Stratford and passed on to Warwick, saving always the abiding interest of those two widely different but historic towns. The Warwickshire country to the north of the Avon, reaching to Alcester and Henley in Arden, enjoys, to be sure, the full glamour of being Shakespearean soil. Alcester is a pleasant enough looking little

market town, but otherwise quite unremarkable, with a parish church mostly of eighteenth century date. Henley may be dismissed in the same terms except for an old market inn and a good many timbered houses and the extremely interesting Norman church of Beaudesert just outside it, while a couple of miles to the southward is the park and seventeenth century Italian mansion of Wootton Wawen. Much more interesting, however, is its large and striking church, containing work of every period from Saxon to late Perpendicular, and among a store of curious things the dust of Somerville, the poetic Nimrod who, whatever the precise value of his method of expressing it, felt the poetry of the chase and of field sports as thousands of inarticulate sportsmen feel it, but not many poets, undoubtedly to their great loss.

All this country to the banks of the Avon was once covered by the forest of the Arden, which was not, however, a forest in the legal or Crown sense of the word. South of the Avon, that part of Warwickshire spreading towards Edgehill and the Cotswolds, and to my thinking its most delectable portion, was a notable grain country and for the period thickly populated, though it is well to remember that these various granaries of England produced crops of about one-fifth of the normal yield of to-day, and such as the most unambitious of modern farmers would plough under without hesitation. However that may be, when the forest of Arden, like those of Wyre and Feckenham, was cut down for smelting the iron ore that lay to the north of it, the virgin soil was ploughed up and seeded to wheat and grew such crops that the men of the Feldon across the Avon, whose lands had been cropped since early Saxon times and probably long before, felt the competition so severely,

that they gradually set their lands to grass and thus caused their population to melt away. So at least the local historians tell us, and the situation is suggestively modern. It sounds like the result of the Manitoba prairies on the farms of old Canada, whose owners laid down their lands for precisely the same reason; but the population in this case, instead of melting away, applied themselves to dairying and small products, an opening not available to the unfortunate men of the Feldon in the Middle Ages.

In the triangle roughly defined by lines drawn from Stratford to Henley and from Henley to Alcester and Bidford, with the Avon as a base, one might well find ample material for an archæological magazine. It is also a country that, as I have said before, may be honestly recommended to our American visitors as a good average sample of that aspect of England, the combed and the groomed, which most naturally appeals to most of them, particularly during their impressionist period, which is unfortunately the whole period of too many. Since they come to Stratford in any case as pilgrims at another shrine but Nature's, and so often combine with this homage almost their only peep at English rural landscape — for the twenty-five-mile London radius is not real country—it is on the whole well. But for an Englishman, not confined all his days in a town when those particular emotions are kindled by anything fresh and green, the Warwickshire country north of the Avon and Stratford is not exhilarating. It would be affectation to pretend that it is. It may be to a native, that is to such as have any sense of these things at all, which is quite right, but his point of view is altogether different, and quite useless for other people. I have been all over this country, a good deal of it several times, and have many

pleasant memories, though somewhat blurred ones, perhaps, of shady highways, of old barns, of homesteads, of cottages, of thickets, of wild flowers. But to discourse upon it to any purpose would most likely alienate most readers of discretion who are not likely to tolerate a catalogue of churches or an inventory of country-house interiors in a book that is meant for the chair, and this is not a guide-book. There is little history of the kind to stir one's blood as an alien, nor such an environment as makes small things seem memorable. There are fine distant views from many high points, but they are mostly views of the country we have left behind us, of the vale of Evesham, of Bredon Hill, or of the Cotswold. Happily our business here is with the Avon, and if betimes some wider flight invites us, it is stimulated by fancy or discretion, not by obligation.

Coughton, an old house of the Throgmorton family, just north of Alcester, has a flavour of romance, having been occupied by the wealthy young Everard Digby of Norfolk, one of the conspirators in the Gunpowder Plot, for the few days preceding the fatal fifth. The two priests, Fathers Greenway and Garnet, and some Catholic ladies, but half in the dread secret, waited at Coughton for the result and were brought the news of its failure by Catesby's servant, Bates. Wilmecote, too, where the home of Mary Arden, Shakespeare's mother, is still standing, lies between Alcester and Stratford. Turning off the high road at Kinwarton Station, near Coughton, one August morning, the memory of many pleasant tortuous ways through a sequestered country, as I groped my way through twisting lanes to Wilmecote, comes vividly back. The little Alne, too, is really at times a purling stream, and where I encountered it at one spot emerging from a grove and falling over the dam of a disused sequestered

WELFORD MILL AND WEIR

mill, the effect was admirable. Walcot, again, is a hamlet that stays in my mind for its delightful old-world timbered cottages set at odd angles and embellished by the gayest of little gardens, all clustering upon a by-road, where it climbs out of a deep dell under an avenue of immense elms. Wilmecote, a somewhat ordinary village, has few attractions but the surpassing one of the old farmhouse in which dwelt the yeoman father of Mary Arden. It is a modest building of some seven or eight rooms and dormer windows in the roof, standing just back from the road behind a garden strip, and is still a farmhouse, as in the time of the Ardens, with ancient and roomy buildings in the rear. When I visited it, they were all busy threshing in the stackyard, which so obviously accounted for the lack of response to my knocks at the wide-open door, I took the liberty of walking through the low passage, with a passing glance at the living rooms, which no doubt have been altered since those occupants used them who give the little house such significance for us to-day. The old oak beams, however, are still *in situ*, and the general appearance of the place is such as one would expect and wish for.

As you approach Stratford by the main Evesham road, above the north bank of the river, it bursts on the sight from the top of Bardon Hill, the last and highest of many ascents, to singular advantage. The prospect five miles back upon the same highway looking west from the hill above Bidford, already alluded to, has a western and Border flavour; you there see big hills looming in the near distance, such as Bredon, Cleeve, and the Malverns. Looking eastward from here, however, over a fairly wide prospect, you feel at once that you are looking into the Midlands. Stratford with its, perhaps from this

point, too strong flavour of red brick, lies compactly in a basin rather than a valley, but the beautiful spire of the church, the Shakespeare Memorial, and other notable buildings strike a sufficiently dominant note to remind you, if such were needed, that you are looking down on no ordinary market town. Eight miles away on the right the long ridge of Edgehill shoots eastward from the Cotswolds, and you can mark the course of the Stour, which just below joins the Avon from the south, if you know your bearings, as far as Shipstone. Right ahead, too, you can follow the course of the Avon winding beneath towards Stratford not so much by the glimpse here and there afforded of its waters, but more consistently by the fringing willows that mark its winding way through verdant meadows.

CHAPTER VIII

STRATFORD-ON-AVON

IF any little town in England could be called self-conscious it is surely Stratford-on-Avon. There is no other in any way occupying the quite peculiar position that Stratford has occupied in the public eye upon both sides of the Atlantic with increasing prominence for half a century. If it were not for the author of its glory the name of Stratford would in all probability mean just as little or just as much to the ear of a person in Hampshire or Yorkshire to-day as Alcester or Henley-in-Arden does. I think, moreover, one would have it so. It is a most complete and felicitous example of the little agricultural country town with its roots in the past, and, save for the signs of Shakespeare worship, as slightly unaffected by modern changes and adventitious influences as any such place could well be. The smirching industries of the Midlands have not come near it, for Coventry and Redditch are as yet well out of reach. Its immediate neighbourhood is purely agricultural and pastoral, and so far as any part of England, being the most beautiful country in the world, can be described as commonplace, this may without offence be fairly called so.

Nor is there any paradox in the suggestion that so much the more does its atmosphere seem in harmony with England's greatest genius. Though one may

one's self prefer the slopes of Dartmoor, the foot of the Malverns, or the Wye valley, one feels that this fat heart of England is the very setting one would ask for the personality of Shakespeare, and is altogether more appropriate than an atmosphere of exalted natural beauty, such as we are happy in associating with some merely great singer. It is a mere commonplace that a typical bit of rural England like this corner of Warwickshire, above all at such a period, is the best background for Shakespeare, and one can hardly think that enthusiasts do the situation much service by idealizing the homely scenes which they exploit so indefatigably for traces either of his youthful indiscretions or that profoundly respectable middle age which he was permitted to enjoy in his native town.

One almost hesitates to tread on ground that has been covered and re-covered by so many pens in such a mass of literature. But the ordinary pilgrim in possession of only such facts and theories of Shakespeare's connection with his native town as are within every one's ready reach must feel the significance of these two periods of his life. If Shakespeare's association with the place had been limited merely to his birth and youth, and had he then wandered away for ever, after the more common fashion of great men, Stratford would still be famous. But the "return of the native" to a yet more intimate connection with his old home in middle life, and his honours thick upon him, and, so far as we may judge, an honest pride in becoming a leading burgher and owner in his own obscure town is unique. It gives Stratford far more than the interest of a mere birthplace and nursing mother, and amply justifies the character of a national shrine into which the little town has in the last half-century been more and more

exalted. Probably in the early seventeenth century the call of a mountain valley would in no case have been so insistent to a wandering son who had won fame and name as in the nineteenth. But, nevertheless, that the typical ordinary English country-side should have had this magnetic power over so illustrious a one makes surely for the greater fascination in the Shakespearean associations of Stratford. Certainly to me it seems so—and if one may venture with due humility to record a mere personal fancy, the return of the poet, his residence, and his death at Stratford seem almost a greater glory to the place than his birth.

Certainly Stratford is unique. On a damp afternoon in November, but for a few significant placards in its somewhat suspiciously smart shop windows, you might follow down its ancient High Street involved perhaps in the intricacies of a travelling flock of sheep, and swear that the little town lived and moved and had its sole being in the price of wheat and stock. Take a bright summer day, on the other hand, and the mark of the outer world is all over it. You will jostle at every turn not only the natives of all countries that speak Shakespeare's tongue, but of many that do not. This would, of course, be unnoticeable in Piccadilly or even on the High at Oxford, but to the contemplative soul not in a hurry, with a good many score of little English country towns more or less like this one in the mind, the spectacle is a singular one. Stratford has a moderate showing of genuine old houses, but does not profess to be upon the same plane in this respect as Tewkesbury. And as my concern in this book is with Shakespeare's Avon, and not directly with the poet's native town, and his conjectured haunts around it, I should like again to urge our visitors from across the seas to remember

that there are three towns upon the Avon below Stratford, to say nothing of some villages, among the best in England, well worthy of their attention. And for such pilgrims as have leisure for something more than the conventional tribute at the Stratford altar, and also an eye to the rural beauties of England and any curiosity at all concerning its landscape, I would make free to remind them that these beauties wax steadily with the river's downward flow. Some Shakespeare pilgrims are in a portentous hurry. On a recent visit to the beautiful church, wherein lies the poet's dust, and which forms, in connection with the river gliding by it, Stratford's greatest ornament, I was privileged to witness one of those performances that we sometimes read of with more than half a notion that they belong rather to the humorous than the serious side of journalism. I was lingering on this occasion in the north porch, the place of public entry, talking to the custodian, when a young couple, male and female, brushed past us and sped down the avenue of limes, which so picturesquely divides the churchyard to the gate, with a celerity that of itself would have called for no remark in a place where people were in a chronic state of catching trams. But my friend the custodian, who must see and hear many precious things in the course of his daily round, called my attention to the Americans, for such they were, as something a little outside even his experiences. It appears that in their urgency, while demanding the ticket at the door which makes visitors free of the chancel and Shakespeare's grave and bust, the confession had escaped them that they were engaged in a competition for some sort of wager, either against time or some other egregious pair or pairs of Philistines, to take in as

many European sights as could be compassed within a given time. Stratford, which in itself would be a stiff item in such a programme, was part of this amazing record, and I was given to understand that the dispatch with which they made the trip up the aisle to the grave and back was barely within the bounds of decorum.

Almost every one in person or through illustration knows the appearance of Shakespeare's church, as seen from the nearer bridge, lifting its tall, tapering spire with such distinction above its leafy precincts on the banks of the Avon, which here as at Evesham has been artificially widened to the great artistic advantage of the old town whose bounds it washes. Edging the churchyard and overhanging the placid river is a fringe of stately rook-haunted elms, and in the centre of the same level, beautifully kept graveyard, quite clear of the town at its southern extremity, is planted the Church of the Holy Trinity. It is a happy circumstance that a parish church, so much more imposing and generally inspiring than one might perhaps look for in such a place as Stratford, should cover the dust of Shakespeare and form such a noble as well as a genuine feature in the Stratford landscape. And though not the whole or part of a mighty abbey fane, such as remains to the three towns lower down the river, this one, even apart from its situation and associations, is a really fine specimen of a collegiate church. For such it was before the Reformation, happy in the possession of a dean, a chapter, and a brotherhood of priests.

Stratford Church consists of a nave over 100 feet long with north and south aisles, a north porch, transepts, chancel, and a central tower with battlements and corner turrets carrying an eighteenth century

spire, 83 feet in height. Though some earlier Norman work is embodied in the tower and elsewhere, practically none is visible. Otherwise the transepts, tower, and north aisle, all of Early English date, though a good deal altered from the original, comprise the oldest part of the building, which on entering displays a fine, spacious, and handsome interior richly decorated. The nave is thirteenth century, with a good panelled oak roof supportd by an arcade of decorated arches springing from hexagonal piers. The clerestory was pulled down in the fifteenth century and rebuilt as we now see it with a row of large lantern windows almost touching one another. The south aisle is of the early fourteenth century, and like the north aisle is lit by four three-light windows. The north porch, the principal entrance, is fifteenth century embattled and containing a parvise. The chancel, a fine example of Perpendicular work, was rebuilt about the end of the fifteenth century, while the choir stalls are mainly original and fashioned of massive oak, with quaintly carved miserere seats.

Just within the altar rails are a number of flat stones indicating the Shakespeare graves. The one nearest the north wall is that of Anne Shakespeare, wife of the poet. The next one covers the remains of Shakespeare himself, with the well-known lines cursing any one who ventures to interfere with his bones—no superfluous precaution in those days when remains that came in the way of later interments were treated with such scant reverence. Indeed, on more than one occasion, attempts were actually made to steal those of the poet himself. To the south of these are the gravestones of Thomas Nash, husband of the poet's granddaughter, of Dr. John Hall who married Shakespeare's favourite daughter, Susanna, and lastly

those of that lady herself who died a widow in 1649.

> Witty above her sexe, but that's not all;
> Wise to Salvation was good Mistress Hall.
> Something of Shakespeare was in that, but this,
> Wholly of him, with whom she's now in blisse.

Then, again, at some height up, on the north wall, is the famous bust of the poet, fashioned in the year 1623, about which so many hard things are said. As Shakespeare's family were all alive when it was executed there must be some sort of likeness to the original, whatever its merits as a work of art. It is thought to have been taken from a mask after death, and any clue which helps us to realize what the man was like is very much more important than the abstract quality of the sculptor's performance. The mere colouring alone, the blue eyes and auburn hair and beard, though repainted, is valuable. On the east wall of the chancel and on the north side of the altar, beneath an arch supported by Corinthian columns, lies the effigy of John Combe, the friend and contemporary of Shakespeare, dressed in a gown and holding a book. He lived in the college, the former residence of the clergy, was conspicuous for his charities, and died in 1614. Next to Shakespeare on the same wall are two white marble busts of John Combe's son Richard and his intended wife Judith. Nor should one overlook a small brass close to the poet's bust in memory of Halliwell Phillipps, the well-known and voluminous writer on Shakespeare.

It is here, of course, at these cold stones covering the dust of Shakespeare and his relatives that the interest of visitors largely centres. It is worth remembering, too, that the Shakespeare family had this

right of burial within the chancel rails, since the poet had purchased the great tithes.

There are far finer monuments in the church than any of these, mostly at the end of the north aisle, recumbent alabaster figures of the Cloptons, and the Carews, Earls of Totnes, both their men and women, and also one of Sir Edward Walker, who purchased New Place, Shakespeare's house, from the Halls, and who helped Lord Clarendon with his great history of the Rebellion. I was seated in contemplation of these in the north aisle—in the Clopton chapel in fact—on one occasion where also was a quiet-looking little lady who proved to be an American, surveying them long and steadfastly in the intervals of most obviously despairing references to a chart of the church and its monuments. We may each have sat there perhaps for five minutes, when at last in a gentle voice, pathetically suggestive of her topographical struggles, she exclaimed, "*Can* you tell me, sir, which *is* Shakespeare of all those figures?" Most certainly she was not an Episcopalian, and to the other Protestant creeds, whose churches I take it have no particular points of the compass and certainly few intricacies, and to whose average disciples, I presume, transepts, choirs, presbyteries, north aisles, and south aisles are almost enigmatic terms, the directions of the guide-book through the mazes of a great church or a cathedral must surely prove a quite formidable mental strain.

There are visitors' books, of course, near the door of the church, one especially devoted to Americans, who as a people have done so much for Stratford and enjoy themselves there so much more than English pilgrims. And so they should, for many of them are not merely paying their respects to Shakespeare, but are seeing a bit of provincial England for the first

time. The ordinary American travellers, too, are less critical, more ready abroad, as at home, to take the romance of the past in all its details for granted and without question, and, unless used to it, somewhat overawed by the weight of years that gazes at them from every quarter in Old England. For this freshness they may be envied. I have no patience with the Briton who assumes an air of amused surprise at this particular form of transatlantic ardour, whether expressed in the undeniably strident note of Chicago or in the cultured tones of Boston. The English tourist is sceptical of tradition and quite as often pretends to be. It is difficult to picture those great droves of one's mediaeval forbears and their womenfolk on long laborious journeys to lay their offerings upon the shrine of Thomas à Becket or of any one other saint. It would be more pertinent to say that it is hard to realize what a change the Reformation and the subsequent Puritan movement made in the English character.

Old Stratford is skirted by quite a thick margin of roads and avenues of red brick villas, not æsthetically offensive, but just the ordinary residential quarter that springs up around country towns now that tradesmen no longer live over their shops, but, like the professional and wholesale trading element, grow roses or play tennis upon their own half acre in a suburb. But old Stratford alone concerns us here, and the main street, which, under different names, is of a considerable length, contains the chief objects of interest that are not modern, always excepting the Birthplace, which stands in Henley Street, an artery crossing the eastern limit of the other and continuing down the broad space of Bridge Street to the river. It seems almost banal to expend a few lines on a building, every stone and beam and window of

which has been the text of many pamphlets as well as the bone of many controversies. But it is singularly felicitous that two half-timbered houses of mid-sixteenth century date, knocked into one and that certainly belonged to Shakespeare's father, should have survived long enough to emerge into the secure harbourage of the Shakespeare Revival. What precise restoration this ancient building, abutting on the street with its dormer windows, has undergone may be read in many local hand-books. It is enough here that Shakespeare's father, a yeoman, became prosperous by successful trading, was able to buy first one and later on the other of these two adjoining houses, and became mayor or high bailiff of the little town that had only recently been incorporated and promoted to such civic honours. That John Shakespeare fell later into difficulties, and so brought his name more than once upon the town records, adds at any rate to the slender stock of the family history that is preserved for us.

The two united houses, the one in which the poet's father lived and in which he himself was born, now known as the Birthplace, and the other historically designated the "Woolshop", from the fact of John Shakespeare having used it for that purpose, passed through the ownership of William to that of his sister and daughters Joan Hart and Susanna Hall. The latter, who became eventually the sole owner, left it to her daughter Lady Barnard, who, dying childless, left it back to the Harts, and for over a century these descendants of Shakespeare's sister, retail tradesmen, butchers, furriers, tailors, and the like, owned and apparently occupied it. Through them the house retained its connection with the Shakespeare family as late as 1806, when the poverty of the children of

SHAKESPEARE'S BIRTHPLACE

Thomas Hart after his death forced a sale, and their connection with Stratford was finally severed. The last of these collateral descendants of Shakespeare emigrated to Australia about the year 1864.

I had not intended even a summary of Shakespeare's genealogy, as it all belongs to that immense subject into which it would be both superfluous and perilous for one professing no particular equipment to enter. I certainly do not propose to take my reader, with the inevitable and unavoidable swarm of visitors that also pay their shilling, through the Birthplace, to catalogue the interesting contents of the museum therein contained, or to gaze upon the rude and obviously genuine attic wherein tradition says that the immortal bard was born.

With regard to the Birthplace, with a big B, it always seems to me that the spot in which the cradle of a great man was rocked is absolutely the least interesting of all the scenes with which he was intimately associated. By comparison, for instance, with Rydal Mount and Dove Cottage, what person of discretion greatly cares to see the house in Cockermouth in which Wordsworth was born? Shakespeare, the man, however, is so distractingly elusive, that one is thankful for very little. Possibly, too, he went to live with his father at the Birthplace after his early marriage to Ann Hathaway. But if New Place, which the poet made his home on his return to Stratford, and within which he died, were still standing, that would be indeed a hearth to linger by.

It is now many years since a most entertaining short story, entitled "The Birthplace", came from the pen of Mr. Henry James. It describes the experiences and emotions of an educated couple in reduced circumstances who accept the position of custodians

at the much visited shrine of a great man. They piously cultivated, before entering into possession, an awesome sense of the importance of their impending duties, and revelled in the altruistic fashion in which they looked forward to performing them. They spoke to one another of the great dead whose ancient haunts they were to inhabit and illuminate for a touring world, hitherto accustomed only to the perfunctory bleating of some unlettered custodian, as Him, uttering the word with reverentially bated breath. The Him in this case might be Shakespeare himself but for the wholly serious and official manner in which the facts and theories regarding his life are distinguished, and so to speak edited for the highly superior officials who proclaim them at intervals. In this other case there was no such supervision, and the illiterate guardians of the Manes had hitherto indulged themselves and the pilgrims with much picturesque biography that had no foundation in fact. The dreamy scholar and his wife, of Mr. James's creation, were going to change all that and treat the business on a higher plane, worthy of its great subject.

The public on neither side of the Atlantic appreciated this scholarly and conscientious treatment; such refinement of enthusiasm appealed to them not at all. Receipts fall off; the committee talk ominously; dismissal and ruin appear to threaten the hapless pair. I think it is the wife, the more practical partner of course, who first recognizes the urgent need for a change of method, which they shamefacedly and for bread-sake alone proceed to carry out, with such amazing thoroughness that the fame of their picturesque and thrilling discourse reaches to the farthest bounds of the United States. People come tumbling over one another as never before to see the Birthplace,

and listen to its stirring tale with a correspondingly gratifying result to the balance-sheet and the demeanour of the trustees. One day a scholarly visitor who had respected and appreciated the enthusiasm and altruistic attitude of the poor but cultured custodian on a previous visit, now paid another, and, unrecognized or unseen, listened with amazement to the highly coloured rhetoric of his former hypercritical and fastidious cicerone. It brought about a further interview in which this abashed and shamefaced breadwinner confessed all and was rescued for better things and a better job by the influential stranger.

Heaven forbid that I should breathe a word against the honest men who do their arduous duty in such positions, lay or ecclesiastical. On the contrary, and I can speak at any rate with a fairly wide experience, it is surprising to me how many one finds possessed of true enthusiasm that the deadening daily round cannot kill. Give such a man the opportunity when the gate is locked and the crowd have gone, and he will warm to the subject in altogether another fashion and with unmistakable and genuine enjoyment and no little knowledge. You would fancy, too, that an individual who spent his days in taking well-meaning but mostly ill-equipped groups of visitors round a cathedral, would rush away on his fortnight's holiday to some far-away and seemingly blessed spot beyond the reach of church bells, or chanting choirs, or intoning minor canons. But I have met quite a number who spend their brief vacations in study of other abbeys, or other cathedrals, or other castles. I don't know where the custodians of the treasures of Stratford-on-Avon spend their holidays, but they are the most effective and conscientious set of wights.

The Birthplace is a good specimen of a sixteenth

century house, and as the only interior of that date which thousands from the new countries ever see in their lives, has of course a quite unique importance. In the main street of the town there are several old houses which we need not catalogue, having come from Tewkesbury ; a particularly noticeable one, however, is a half-timbered, overhanging building of five gables with shops underneath, next to the "Shakespeare Hotel". But the grammar school where Shakespeare, according to tradition, was educated, and according to the good old Wiltshire gossip and antiquary, John Aubrey, was a teacher for a brief time, together with the guild-chapel and guild-hall all connected, make an exceedingly striking group in that southerly extension of the High Street known as Church Street.

Now there is one thing that distinguishes Stratford above other towns of its class. Its records are extraordinarily full and complete, and this is curiously appropriate, if only they told us a little more about the only person of supreme importance with which the town has ever been concerned. So the guild-hall, a fine old room, probably rebuilt in 1417, has a good deal to say for itself. Some contemporary paintings of a sacred character can just be traced upon the walls, but two shields bearing the arms of England and those of Beauchamp quartering Despenser are more distinct. There are also some accounts scrawled upon the wall of fifteenth century date. The hall was the scene of great feasting in pre-Tudor times, and an existing account for the liquor consumed in one of these orgies in the reign of Henry IV foots up to 80 gallons of ale, while among the solids were 103 pullets. In the great days of Elizabeth the hall was placed at the disposal of travelling companies of actors, and it is on the records that John Shakespeare,

the poet's father, doubtless while mayor or high bailiff, presided at an entertainment of this character in 1569. At the upper end of the hall a door opens into the armoury where is some good seventeenth century panelling. Thence a stairway leads to the muniment room, once used as the repository of the town records. It has a fine timber roof, and on the wall two Tudor roses, one white with a red centre and the other the reverse, indicating the union of the houses of Lancaster and York in the marriage of Henry VII with Elizabeth of York. This is now the school library, and out of the room opens the big schoolroom itself, formerly two rooms where Shakespeare supposititiously both acquired and imparted knowledge. At any rate it has been decided which was his desk, for this last has now been deposited in the Museum of the Birthplace. Outside upon the playground a building, known by the curious appellation of the Pedagogue's House, confronts the visitor, and is as well worth his attention as any room in Stratford, the beams of its roof being of prodigious proportions. It is now used as classrooms. The school is a very old foundation and of pre-Reformation origin, having been founded in the reign of Henry VI by a priest of the town named Jollyffe. Its revenues were seized of course by Henry VIII, but later on restored by Edward VI, from which time it seems to have fulfilled the ordinary functions of a local grammar school. Its situation in so small a town has no doubt prevented it from profiting by its associations with Shakespeare, and its situation as a show building, like so many others, into a prominent school. Adjoining it are the old almshouses of the guild which had precisely the same experiences at the Dissolution and again at the more generous hands of the youthful Edward.

The old guild-chapel adjoining the grammar school is now used as a second church. It fronts upon the street, and is one of the most prominent objects in the town. Sir Hugh Clopton rebuilt it in the time of Henry VII on the site of an old Augustinian chapel of date 1296. It is conspicuously late Perpendicular in character, and its great windows and low embattled tower are in fine harmony and leave no doubt as to its character the moment it comes in sight. Close by, with nothing in fact but a by-street between them, are the gardens of New Place where once stood the house in which Shakespeare lived after his final return to Stratford as an owner of land and tenements, and apparently happy in being the leading citizen of his native town.

There are some traces of the foundations of the original house and also of its well, still left in the gardens, which last were bought by public subscription some fifty years ago and converted into an extremely alluring resort for the public. The story of the vanished house is rather curious and at the same time not a little distressing. Built originally in the time of Henry VII by Sir Hugh Clopton, of that well-known local family, as " a pretty house of brick and timber ", it was probably the most important in the town and was known as the Great House. It passed from the hands of the Cloptons into those of a local lawyer in 1563, and was eventually purchased by William Shakespeare in 1597 for £60, which is thought to indicate that the place must have been in a state of dilapidation. Shakespeare, at any rate, repaired it, and called it New Place, and in the deed of sale it is described as " one messuage, two barns, and two gardens ". The poet was at this time thirty-three and not nearly prepared as yet to retire into private life, so the town clerk became its for a time tenant. On Shakespeare's retirement from

GRAMMAR SCHOOL, STRATFORD-ON-AVON

London in 1609 he settled here with his family and died in the house seven years later. All evidence seems to point that the poet had greatly at heart the reinstating of his father in the position from which misfortune had reduced him. He appears to have already made several visits to Stratford with a view to this laudable and filial ambition, which his own success in life must have materially advanced. The modern may smile at Shakespeare's importuning for a family coat of arms, granted apparently with some reluctance to his father. But the purchase of lands and the tithes of the church, together with New Place, by the poet, evidently altered all this; the suits which were in process or pending against John Shakespeare, the once respected but now decadent ex-mayor, were disposed of by the son's earnings, and all was well. Though these years of residence are almost blank, filled in chiefly by conjecture and the conclusions arrived at by many zealous and able investigators from indirect evidence, Shakespeare's own house would nevertheless be a treasure indeed, a much greater one than the Birthplace, and the way of its destruction aggravates the loss. For it is reasonable to think that if it had survived for another generation or two in this quiet old town, its memorable associations would have made their appeal and saved it.

In the course of time New Place passed out of the possession of Shakespeare's descendants, falling again curiously enough into the hands of the Cloptons, who after over a century of ownerships sold it to a certain Francis Gastrell, vicar of Frodsham in Cheshire. Tourists of some sort must even thus early have haunted Stratford, for a mulberry tree planted by Shakespeare in 1609 became so much sought after by visitors that the recent and reverend owner hewed it down in a

moment of spleen for the trouble they gave him. But this was nothing to the after performances of this preposterous parson. He had apparently to reside at Lichfield, perhaps as a canon, for part of the year, and was so infuriated at having to pay the poor rates in Stratford while absent, that he razed his house to the ground and so cut off his nose to spite his face, and incidentally posterity. The house, it is true, seems to have been considerably altered by the later Cloptons, but nevertheless is thought to have contained a great deal of the original building. It is interesting to note that, during the Civil War, Queen Henrietta Maria stopped here for three days, and that, too, during the occupation of Shakespeare's daughter, Mrs. Hall. This is often cited as a proof of the great respectability of the Shakespeare family. Of course they were respectable! It is perfectly clear what the Halls were, and New Place being one of the best, if not the best, house in Stratford would naturally be selected for the Royal lodgings. Another writer, deprecating the old idea that Shakespeare sprang from the humblest sphere, says he belonged to the "upper middle class". I only mention this as illustrating the hopeless lack of knowledge and imagination that makes so many persons of our generation regard the sixteenth and seventeenth century through the medium of county and country town society in 1900. I have said enough perhaps of this in a former chapter, but imagine talking of John Shakespeare as belonging to the upper middle class! I do not allude to the proposition but to the phrase; one can almost feel in it its author's limitations. Then another enthusiast for Shakespeare's "gentility" speaks of the family as having originated in a person of territorial consequence.

The clan of Shakespeare, for the family seems to

have been a numerous one in the three counties, may have originated in such a source, but under the English social system how futile to quote it when the early tie has long been severed and forgotten and they had all scattered as small farmers or tradesmen. John Shakespeare is held to be the son of a small farmer at Snitterfield. He started as a glover but rose to a leading position in Stratford, by character and ability no doubt. Again oppressed by the twentieth century a writer comes in and says that he gained something by his marriage with Mary Arden, a "gentleman's daughter and an heiress". Mary Arden's portion was a trifling strip of land. Her father was a well-to-do farmer. It is quite true that his father was the younger son of a squire, but younger sons and their sons drifted away to anything in that day, as we have noticed at some length in an earlier chapter. Robert Arden, Mistress John Shakespeare's father and the poet's grandfather, as we have seen, was a fair-sized farmer. He might quite as likely have been a woolcomber or haberdasher in Stratford. County society and country town society, with the partial cleavage and the vulgarities inseparable from it, is a comparatively modern development. Robert Arden was no doubt a simple rustic person, who busied himself on his farm at Wilmecote with sufficient servants to work it, who in part no doubt lived in the roomy little farmhouse we now see, and fed at a common table, presided over by the good-man and his wife. That he was the grandson of a knight of good estate made probably little difference to him one way or the other. The womenfolk, below the really great people who had also substantial possessions and rank to keep up, had not entered into social competition, nor begun to make things unpleasant for one another and harass-

ing for themselves, inevitable in a country where the basic principles of a social order have always, fortunately for England, been disregarded. There was no reason for such. The Lucy ladies of Charlecote did not drive about leaving cards, nor give garden parties to which the ladies of Stratford burned for invitations.[1] Mistress Arden, though her husband was the grandson of a knight, probably gave no thought to the matter at all, busied herself in a comparatively humble way with her household and servants, her conserves, her linen, and her spinning-wheels like the wives of a thousand other squires' grandsons, who followed commercial pursuits of one kind or another. It is quite certain that modern writers, more particularly of course in fiction, very often concern themselves much more with the niceties of their subject's social position than these ancients did themselves; and that half consciously they apply the complicated standards of after times to the rural society of earlier ones, when, apart from the splendour of the great, everything, I take it, was fairly simple and devoid of uncomfortable self-consciousness. A coat of arms was an honest object of ambition, and the ready way in which it was often granted to country tradesmen and others should serve to dim somewhat the ingenuous faith of most of us that they are inseparable from the clash of knightly spurs and deeds of derring-do on blood-stained mediaeval battle-fields. That is to say in England, for in continental countries these things are of course different, just as are, or were, till yesterday their rigid castes of birth. When the German, for instance, with the significant but genuine prefix of *von*, regards all Germans lacking it as of inferior clay, the system may seem foolish, and has

[1] *Note.*—It need scarcely be said that no local or personal significance is attached to the illustration.

obvious disadvantages and dangers, but the attitude being one of time-honoured heredity is at least consistent and certainly not vulgar. Nor do I imagine there was much snobbery in Shakespeare's day, since cringing to great nobles wasn't snobbish, but merely recognized custom. There was nothing, at all events, approaching the exuberant vulgarity that the loose and healthy system of Britain bred later among every class to the delight of two centuries of cynics and satirists. Mixed up as things were in the country in Shakespeare's time, so far as birth was concerned, there could have been hardly room for it. Robert Arden of Wilmecote, for instance, took some position no doubt, as his worldly substance and his character gave him. No one, probably himself included, troubled to think of the knightly ancestor, not because people despised descent or good birth, but for the fact that there was no part of the social machinery in which such an indirect asset would be any advantage. One cannot fancy Mistress Lucy saying, "Dear me, it's very awkward. Here's a man taken a farm and living like an ordinary farmer, who, I'm told, is one of the Ardens. Of course my father and his grandfather were friends and near neighbours. Goodness knows what his wife is like; some common person, I suppose. I wonder if I must call. What a bore!"

I do not know who Mistress Robert Arden was. But if these ladies, six miles apart, did not meet, which was probable, with the domestic home-staying proclivities of women and the bad roads of those days, there was probably no shadow of self-consciousness on either side. And if peradventure they both went to see one of those companies of players that we are told performed at times in the guild-hall, and met, I have a strong conviction that the well-to-do farmer's wife, though an Arden by marriage, would render the

precise amount of respect—fulsome, perhaps, to modern ears, but then honest and customary to the greater lady—without a pang, while the other would be hearty and unafraid and possessed of no terrors that the other was looking out for a slight or a flavour of patronage. As for the Squire of Charlecote, assuming him to be a type, it is tolerably certain that for cheerful company over the bottle in his own house, he would not within reasonable limits have been in the least degree particular. And in those days in the country districts, beyond the intimate circle of friends and relations, it was only the men who counted, and that they practised a catholicity of selection any one may know who concerns himself at all with this period.

It is a curious thing, and fewer Americans than Englishmen will need to be reminded of it, that another great but scantily recognized Elizabethan Captain, John Smith, the virtual founder of Virginia, was of precisely such parentage as Shakespeare—not in detail, but in substance. John Smith's father was a tenant farmer in Lincolnshire of the same vague remote clan gentility as is claimed for Shakespeare. He, also, owned a few tenements in the little Lincolnshire town of Willoughby. His mother, oddly enough, had about the same social claims as Mary Arden. He, too, got a grant of arms, but won in his case conspicuously and dramatically by the sword, in the sanguinary wars of the Austrians against the Turks. In Smith's case, again, one finds the confident and unchallenged appropriation of the term "gentleman", so conspicuous in any lists of men of that period, and so misleading to many American writers, who are less advantageously equipped by situation for keeping their heads in these matters than Englishmen. Smith wrote himself down "Gentleman" in quite youth without demur,

as a farmer's son, of local grammar-school education, and long before his coat of arms arrived, a designation, too, that was obviously accepted.

It is not inappropriate that one of the oldest and most picturesque houses in Stratford should have been the residence of the mother of John Harvard, the founder of that famous American university. It is a beautiful little specimen of the half-timbered Elizabethan style, a single gable fronting the street, of three stories, with a single long, mullioned, latticed window almost filling the space in each. On the woodwork are carved the bear of the Beauchamps, the bull of the Warwicks, and other badges, and under the middle window T. R. 1596 A. R., for Thomas and Alice Rogers, the parents of Katherine Harvard. At the corner of Bridge and High Streets, though wearing a modern front, the house is still standing where Shakespeare's daughter, Judith, and her husband, Quiney, a vintner, lived. The old parts of it can be traced back in the town records to the fourteenth century. There are many other old houses, but without any particular associations attaching to them, and they are more or less scattered about the town, in Sheep Street and elsewhere. Among these is a diminutive old tavern of a kind not unusual in England, of which I was told an exact replica had been set up in Chicago by an enthusiastic individual of that city.

All about the river, Stratford wears a singularly pleasant air, and breathes a fine sense of space; Bridge Street itself, which leads down there and contains three or four of the chief hotels, being of quite uncommon span. Then there are the two well-known road bridges quite near together, the one of sixteen arches, built by Hugh Clopton, Lord Mayor of London, in the early sixteenth century, the other erected about a

hundred years ago. The beautiful vista opening down the river to the church has been alluded to and is too well known to dwell upon. The Avon being here forced out to a considerable width and deepened by a dam below the town makes a most picturesque stretch of water, gay in summer-time with boats, and on its farther margin fringed by willows and green fields. Over one or other of these bridges, too, coaches and brakes are constantly passing, taking the ceaseless stream of Stratford pilgrims on one or other of the usual rounds by Charlecote, Hampton, Lucy, or Edgehill, by the one bridge to Broadway, and by the other to Campden.

I have never myself been at Stratford during any of the festival weeks when the plays are being performed, but at all times the Shakespeare Memorial Theatre with its collection of treasures, its view from the tower, its inviting gardens fringing the river, and not least the splendid bronze group of figures within them known as the Shakespeare Monument attracts a steady stream of visitors. This vast building, in design and construction, has, I think, few detractors. It is of necessity in violent and prodigious contrast to the sombre old town it overlooks. But that is inevitable, and even to say so much may be held almost sacrilegious. For Stratford is beyond doubt the right place in which to raise such a monument to its great son. Above all, to one who gave such enduring proof that with all his prestige and his popularity he even yet preferred his native Stratford to the greater scene of his fame.

As I have remarked before it is entertaining to note how skilfully nearly all books by natives, dealing with Shakespeare or his country, contrive to ignore the existence of the shires of Worcester and Gloucester, and the discreet manner in which the fact of the town

being on the very edge of Warwickshire is suppressed. The local hand-books include remote places like Rugby, thirty miles away on the farther fringe of the county, and similar regions of Warwickshire which it is not in the least degree likely the Bard of Avon knew anything of; while neighbouring villages on the other side, just over the county border, such as Pebworth, Marston, Welford, Salford Priors, which must have been familiar to Shakespeare are ignored, to say nothing of the picturesque charms of the vale of Evesham, Broadway, Camden, Mickleton, Meon Hill, and many such others. The unknowing stranger, so far as guide-books can influence him, and that is a good long way in the case of a man in a hurry, as so many Stratford visitors appear to be, is dispatched, to quote a single example, along a rather dull road to Alcester, a town of no particular interest, though pleasant enough in spite of its industry in needles and one or two other necessaries, because it is in Warwickshire, while the infinitely more delectable and no lengthier ways that lead out of Stratford down the valley into Worcestershire, or through Gloucester to the foot of the Cotswolds, are quite discreetly omitted. One might not unfairly suspect some latent dread as to the attractions of that country alluring the faithful from Stratford hotels and lodging-houses to novel quarters. But it is the same with more exhaustive publications and even with literary essays. Every country squire who may possibly have seen Shakespeare or talked with him in his years of discretion, and every rustic who may have drunk heel taps with him in his supposititiously gay youth is naturally invested with some adventitious fame. But no one, apparently, a couple of miles away in Gloucestershire or half a dozen miles down the river in Worcestershire, is allowed to have had any truck

with him. Little as we know at all of Shakespeare's private life it is assumed that he only mixed with Warwickshire men, and some of these living at a great distance are thus dug out of obscurity, and problematically dragged within the magic circle. This is hard upon the people in the valley of the Stour, for instance, which river flows in just below Stratford, and upon those about the Avon valley outside Warwickshire, upon whose villages the very same patriotic historians sometimes assert that he even made bad rhymes.

I suppose there are not many strangers who would be likely to spend an entire summer in the Avon valley. But with that rather exceptional experience behind me, originally undertaken without any previous knowledge of the district in the interest of this little book, I should like to say that I feel sure that numbers of discreet and discerning persons of a certain taste and temperament, which could be defined if necessary, would find it fill their notions of a holiday to great perfection. If it is not blasphemous, I should recommend them to make their headquarters lower down the river than Stratford. The latter can be visited as often as desired from any point. As a centre it is admirable for a week, in the case of a foreigner or again for an American, for reasons which I have already given. But the English holiday-maker with serious intentions will do better to make his headquarters somewhere in the Evesham Broadway or Tewkesbury country, and from thence do his obvious duty by the great spots upon the Upper Avon, like Stratford and Warwick, which are easily reached by train or road. I venture this advice with no affiliations or predilections of any kind, and a sufficient acquaintance with the famous little river from its source to its mouth to justify it.

The Stratford hotel, as may be imagined, takes on at times a tolerably cosmopolitan flavour, and is capable of affording to the spectator no little entertainment. This varies with degree, but is more likely to be forthcoming in the less ambitious than in the more exclusive hostelry. I have beguiled several evenings, otherwise ones of small promise for diversion, by a change of scene in this particular. The most cheerful by far are those particular havens where the citizen of the type familiar in every country town who discusses his pipe and glass and the affairs of the nation with tolerable consistency in the same corner, there meets the ever-shifting tourist of the kind who does not dress for dinner, and frequents establishments where that would be held as a superfluity. There are, of course, some local citizens, tradesmen, and professional men keenly alive to the Skakespearean atmosphere, and some of them antiquaries. But with the average specimen the effort to meet the ardent pilgrim on the same plane of enthusiasm is obviously too much, and the struggle between respect for persons who bring money to the town and very much the reverse for their method of spending a holiday is often painfully conspicuous. One can well imagine a Stratford sporting corn chandler or a cattle salesman being a little overdone with " Shakespeare, the man " !

It was in one of these profoundly respectable snuggeries where the informal local parliament and the less fashionable tourist meet one another that I discovered, on entering, one of the latter holding the floor in such unmistakable fashion as to quite silence the local groups, and as he was not talking about Shakespeare, had succeeded in capturing their ear. The subject of his peroration does not matter, but I think it concerned races and dialects. He was a

clerk, I should think, and spoke ordinarily good English, but with the mark of a far county upon it clear as a bell, as it so happened in my ear, but obviously mystifying in no small degree the mixed company he was addressing. "And now," said he, "I will stand a drink to any gentleman who can guess where I come from," and he passed the question slowly round the assembly with the look and gesture of half-schoolmaster, half-auctioneer. Possibly he was the former. One man rated him as a German, which was quite reasonable; another as an Irishman; another as a Welshman; while one brilliantly suggested a French Canadian. A plain American, forced reluctantly into speech by the orator's index finger being presented, so to speak, fully cocked at his head, merely remarked, "Well, sir, I reckon you're too hard for me there", proclaiming thereby his own section, at any rate. The stranger of mysterious origin having apparently traversed the audience, now assumed the attitude of the auctioneer prior to dropping the hammer, and the closing of the offer of further refreshment. Being inconspicuously situated close to the landlord, I was able to prompt that worthy *sotto voce*. "Tell him he's a Tynesider!" said I. My neighbour who, I am quite sure, had no very lucid conception of the term, certainly not of its significance, was more than equal to the occasion, as a Stratford landlord should be, and duly proceeded to inform the orator that he was a Tynesider, that he had known it all along, and had only deferred disclosing that obvious fact till he had given his guests a chance of exhibiting their penetration, though he did not phrase it precisely thus. The Northumbrian looked disconcerted for a moment, and his eye wandered suspiciously past the burly figure of his host, with his

ANN HATHAWAY'S COTTAGE, SHOTTERY

uncompromising Gloucestershire accent, in my direction. "Well, landlord, what's it to be?" And while the latter, with the advantage of intimate experience, called for the soundest of his cordials, there was a murmur of applause, the landlord's friends no doubt wondering at this burst of inspiration from a son of Avon. For as a matter of fact the north-countryman was an educated man, and spoke well, and had only the Northumbrian guttural or "borh", unmistakable to those who know it, but puzzling enough to southerners not thus initiated.

I remember another evening, in very different company, in the smoke-room of the ——— Hotel, that of six or eight dress-coated and unutterably bored looking pilgrims to the shrine, in detached ones and twos, obviously half of them middle-aged Americans of unmistakable status, from Philadelphia or New York—and if this type of a generation or so ago was more eager to start a conversation in strange company, which I do not think he really was, I am quite sure it is so no longer. One or two of them were nodding over picture papers held upside down. Another with a very big cigar and hands clasped over a comfortable protuberance was looking at the ceiling, meditating perhaps upon the Birthplace. Two or three Englishmen had of course resorted to cards. It was a company that in every single case appeared to deprecate the slightest overture and was quite determined to be dull. A late arrival from the dining-room now appeared of a wholly fresh type. He was a spare, well-made, tall man of about fifty, and could not possibly have been mistaken for anything but an English gentleman in any quarter of the world. He was not in evening dress, nor were his grey clothes smart, in the ordinary sense of the word. They were

better, for while pointedly avoiding the latest lines of the male fashion, they sat on him beautifully and were just the sort of clothes a well-bred middle-aged country gentleman with a figure can, with an air of seeming unconcern about his dress, so easily out-class the man of fashion who shares his more self-conscious plumage with all sorts of people that couldn't wear the other to any advantage if they tried. He had a well-chiselled face, combined with a quiet, self-assured expression, common to a good many well-reared Englishmen of some mental capacity and accustomed to exercise authority in one way or another. As if to emphasize his independence of the mode in these respects, he wore a silky auburn beard rather long and not cut in the modern fashion. But his methods were not those of the reserved and exclusive-looking Englishman he appeared, and the last man in the room to make a miscellaneous acquaintance. From the very first moment this apparent chairman of quarter-sessions seemed to resent the almost prickly dullness of the post-prandial gathering. He first sat down near the railroad king, who was contemplating, as I mentioned, at once the end of his cigar and the ceiling, but evidently gave him up as hopeless. He then moved over on the pretext of a match and gave the Philadelphia banker with "The Graphic" upside down every hint short of speech to enter into conversation, but in vain. By this time he had begun to interest me, as his object was palpable, and the invincible stolidity of the others so comical. Finally he landed on the next chair to mine, and I at once gave him his opportunity by remarking that the room was getting a bit warm. "It is", said he, addressing the whole room; "but you would not think much of it if you had spent the last twenty years in

frequent intimacy with one hundred and five in the shade. Yes", continued he, "Queensland can run Hell as close as any place I know. Oh yes, I am undergoing new sensations in more ways than that. I have been back in this country now just two days, since I was thirty, and till three before I sailed from Brisbane I hadn't slept in a bed for nineteen months". So much for my chairman of quarter-sessions or old established Master of Hounds, with just a flavour of scholarship! The railway king's feet and the forelegs of his chair, which had been tilted a trifle, came down with a thud on the floor. He still clasped his waistcoat, but both his gaze and his cigar point returned to earth. The Philadelphia banker dropped "The Graphic" and gave a start, fancying perhaps that he had travelled in dreams to Wyoming, and that an English lord was trying to negotiate a loan to start a cattle company. Henceforward their eyes were steadily fixed on a type they had almost certainly never met before. Here was a man who had obviously for years been equalling the achievements of two cowboys, yet who looked like a British aristocrat on his own ground, and talked with the undiluted accent and intonation of an Oxford don or a secretary at the British Embassy at Washington. All the Americans began to listen. It must have been interesting and quite fresh no doubt to them; a breath from the other, the rival Wild West of the Antipodes. It would in truth have been impossible for our friend to have led a like life in the Western States for twenty years, and emerge with such an exterior and such a voice. His stories and adventures, however, were not those of an Oxford don, nor evidently had he been accustomed of late to take the measure of his audience or to concern himself with their susceptibilities or their cloth.

CHAPTER IX

TO COMPTON WINYATES AND EDGEHILL

THOUGH some way removed from the banks of Avon, and as a matter of fact at the actual source of its tributary the Stour, Compton Winyates is a spot that every pilgrim to Stratford finds his way to if time allows. And this is quite right, for Lord Northampton's famous seat is probably the finest instance of a large Tudor country house untouched by later innovations and dealt with kindly by the hand of time in the whole of England. Moreover, as the noble owner, whose chief abode is at his other seat of Castle Ashby in Northamptonshire, only spends a month or so in the year at this one, the house is open to the public on one day in the week at any rate throughout the summer.

I fail myself to see much object in dwelling upon the interiors of country houses and castles that the reader is not in the least likely ever to get a sight of. Of what particular interest can it be to Mr. Jones to know that "the portrait of a lady" by Lely hangs in her ladyship's boudoir, or that the breakfast-room terminates the suite of apartments on the west front. History and legend are different. If notable or dramatic deeds have been done in a famous house, they have not only some interest in themselves, but the mere exterior and surroundings help greatly to further stimulate it; but there is nothing stimulating or interest-

ing to the stranger, as he looks down the avenue, in the knowledge that the dining-room door is made out of a fragment of the rood screen which was demolished when the parish church was restored in the year 1831.

Compton Winyates may be combined with an extremely pleasant round for a person of tolerable endurance, compassing the valley of the Stour on the outward and the field of Edgehill on the return journey. And Edgehill, that is to say the long ridge itself, forms so prominent a feature and landmark, and when the Cotswolds proper dip to earth, or would do so, saves the outlook to the southward from an overtameness and lack of background in such effective fashion, that if no battle had been fought there it might well claim notice as a leading feature in the Avon valley. It was a day in early September that with myself alone for company I adventured this particular circuit. Nor is the use of the verb here employed wholly apocryphal. For I have not often seen the summer dress, the lush apparel of a fat Midland country, lashed into such complete disarray as on this occasion. For a most violent south-west gale, hurtled the dark, rain-charged clouds too fast across the sky for the fulfilment of their obviously sinister intentions upon the still unstripped harvest fields. The blackness of the outlook, however, the howling of the warm summer tempest, and the clatter always raised when a big gale bursts suddenly after a month of summer days upon an unsuspecting, unprotected town, most successfully intimidated Stratford. Its floating population, its " transients ", as the Americans have it, who may generally be seen streaming away of a morning in every direction, by all manner of methods evidently, upon this one, at any rate, refused to face the open, and I am not surprised. I claim no credit for being either

more sanguine of the day or less faint-hearted: partly because it was my only convenient opportunity for Compton Winyates, and just a little because a summer or autumn gale with a black sky has had for me some unaccountable and overpowering fascination ever since I can remember. It was too far to walk. The more or less public conveyance does not come within my scheme of travel or my notions of enjoyment, even had such been certain to venture out, so I decided, unpromising as it might appear, in favour of that indispensable machine of all work, the cycle. After all, if the wind absolutely dismounts you for a time, nay, for an odd mile or so at intervals, what does it signify if the hours are your own, and it more than makes amends when the turn comes.

I went out of Stratford on this particular morning into the tossing, battered country-side, which looked quite distraught against the hurrying murky skies, as some solitary craft might put out from port, where prudent skippers are biding their time, into the open sea. The Warwickshire roads and lanes have some advantage, to be sure, in a high wind from their sheltering trees and high hedges, but when it comes to a big gale they have their unquestioned inconveniences. For I admit that with twigs and branches flying in every direction from brittle elms, a sense of relief comes over me on emerging for a space into the open. Upon this morning the roads were strewn with light wreckage, and it was still falling in intermittent showers which might have been serious to encounter. Occasionally a few drops fell of such individual proportions as threatened a deluge if the gale did not hold them up. I like to see a Midland summer landscape in a storm. It looks so thoroughly upset, so utterly disconcerted, as might be some gorgeous dame exposed by an untoward fate to the elements in a garden party dress. Along the coast

counties or near the mountains, storms at all times seem somehow natural. One has a fancy at least that the country is more used to them, that the trees bend more readily to the wind, and the hillsides are made of sterner stuff. But it is good to see the Midlands in a gloomy gale, a real gale, once in a while. The change is delightful, the contrast so prodigious. The wildness of the sky, the groaning of the great trees, the tossing of the high rumpled leaves seems to give the land another character, and lends a touch of mystery to scenes that one knows will shed every vestige of it the moment the wind dies and the sun shines once more. The fat Warwickshire landscape shakes off its stately prosiness, if the term may be used with strict limitation and without offence, and breaks for the moment into wild song and poetic suggestion.

But, as I have said, the pleasures of the day were not wholly unalloyed. Ominous threatenings of a disastrous deluge splashed more than once upon my face, but by the mercy of Providence and the sustained vigour of the gale, were not fulfilled, while the trees continued to scatter their lighter wreckage through the air. I took a road on this occasion which I had travelled before under less interesting but more materially comfortable conditions, namely, that which ascends the gentle gradients of the valley of the Stour. To-day, however, it was practically deserted, the only outdoor life stirring seemed to be about the occasional stackyards by the roadside whence came the shouts of men, and straws from hastily covered or half-finished ricks, whirling wildly on the wind.

Villages, however, wear an infinitely better face in sunshine than in storm. They belong pre-eminently to the decorative aspect of the country-side, and Clifford Chambers, the first upon the road, comes

back to me from a former journey on it, when all the world was bright though the road was much more dusty. Clifford sits upon the little Stour (pronounced Stower), which runs hereabouts at a quite creditable pace. One assumes very naturally that this Clifford was one of the innumerable manors of that powerful and acquisitive stock which spread from the Welsh border to power and glory in the north, and terminated in the days of the Protectorate with that doughty Lady Anne, Countess of Pembroke. But this little village has no such origin—according to my friend the vicar of Whitchurch, who is the final authority here and in a good many other places—acquiring its name, long before this arrogant Norman stock were heard of on English soil, from the physical cause so obvious in its two syllables. So much for the Clifford or Clifort. As to the Chambers, the mill and manor seem to have been allotted as a stipend to the "chamberer" or " house steward " of the great abbey of Gloucester, to whom it once belonged.

Atherstone follows next upon the right, just across the Stour, in a woody valley where the spire of a debased Victorian church rises above a picturesque hamlet of thatched roofs. Close to the church, set upon the site and amid the graveyard of an ancient one, is a singularly fine specimen of a Queen Anne farmhouse in red brick. There is an ancient mill here too, which within memory was worked as a fulling mill. The authority just quoted tells me that the site as a corn mill was valued in 1086 at 10s. and " ten sticks of eels ". In the graveyard some lines upon the tomb of a young woman, who died at thirty-three, end in a manner quite felicitous by comparison with the usual doggerel of such compositions :

> Let none suppose they can repent too soon,
> For I found night, before I thought it noon.

But these little villages after all are just off the Shipston road. The first place of note abutting actually upon the highway is Alscot Park, the house appearing at the end of a magnificent elm avenue. Apart from the glory of the timber, which, dating from the middle of the eighteenth century, must be approaching the limit of years generally allotted to the elm, some further interest attaches to the trees as the nurslings of the famous antiquary James West, who purchased the property with his wife's dowry from the Marriott family, and whose descendants still enjoy it. The Marriotts were not here long, but their tenure has some special interest, as the first one was a ward of Shakespeare's old Stratford friend Combe, who may have had a hand in marrying him to the heiress of Alscot, which belonged to the Brownes, rich vintners of the city of London. Here we have another of the innumerable instances of wealthy traders turning landowners, while a town burgher, in fact, is trustee and guardian to a wealthy young knight of ancient family, a triangular arrangement which would play havoc with the social history of England as depicted in the woolly and complacent imagination of that eminent family authority and genealogist Aunt Maria, so often alluded to.

The pretty village of Alderminster sits across the road just beyond the park of Alscot. Within an ample graveyard, well shaded by ancient trees and enclosed by a wall which borders the village road, rises the fine cruciform church of Norman foundation, and from the first, as now, a cruciform building. There is within it a great deal of interesting Early English work. The chancel is lighted by four lancets upon either side, and the east window consists of a triplet of the same, deeply splayed. The central tower is later and is

singularly massive, with pinnacles and gargoyles at the corners and a bell turret at the south-east corner. There are no monuments of interest, however, within or without. The situation of the massive old church is exceptionally pleasing, resting as it does amid its venerable trees and hoary gravestones on a high ledge which slopes on one side to the Stour, and on the other, as already implied, is bordered by the village highway.

Pursuing the Shipston road southward one is always raised up a little, and on a clear day can enjoy a wide prospect over the country we have left behind us in Worcestershire: the Cotswolds and the upper vale of Evesham, with Meon Hill prominent and isolated in the forefront on the south-west. For such, however, and for these other details here briefly noted, which imply a leisurely course and a sunny day, memory goes behind the tempestuous morn that issues in this chapter.

Where the Stour crosses the road beyond Alderminster it discloses a charming foreground prospect of its winding course through Ettington Park, an ancient seat of the Shirley family who are still in possession, and seem quite credibly to have owned it continuously since the time of the Norman Conquest. A portion at least of the present park, my cicerone tells me, has been enclosed for deer since at least the time of Henry VIII. The house suggests in its appearance no particular interest, having been partly rebuilt and altogether refaced, but close by it is the old twelfth century church, disused now for over a hundred years and heavily draped in ivy. The Ettington family have had in recent years their own antiquary and historian, the late Mr. Evelyn Shirley, and in his book may be read by the curious the story of a singularly tenacious stock. There are some old effigies in the

ruined church of a Sir Ralph Shirley and his wife, of date 1327. Beside the highway here, and visible also in other places, are the remains of an old line that might be mistaken for an abortive railroad enterprise. As a matter of fact the relic is much more interesting, and belongs to a period earlier than the first steam railroad.

If I had done my duty in regard to the sights of Stratford, which I feel quite sure I did not, such an army of writers having exhausted every detail of it, I should have mentioned that the second and modern bridge over the Avon there was erected to carry a horse tramway to Shipston; that the line itself was finished with a view to making others like it, and so becoming a section of a network of communications throughout this part of England. It actually ran for many years, carrying goods and passengers, but collapsed of course before the power of steam and Stephenson. Its grass-grown trail and solid embankments alone remain to remind one of the most momentous epoch in industrial history: that tremendous revolution which crushed to pieces in brief space a thousand minor interests, themselves regarded as the very last word of progress for all reasonable time!

At Halford, a mile beyond, there is a church of Norman origin, still retaining a good deal of Norman work, and one of the bells which hang in the tower is of thirteenth century date, and the oldest in Warwickshire. The Roman road, known as the Fosseway here crossed the Stour, now spanned by a fourteenth century bridge, around which a memorable skirmish was fought in the Civil War. Tredington comes next, with a fine church containing some Saxon walls pierced by Norman arches. The seating of a

church is rarely of much archæological interest, but that of Tredington has the unusual distinction of being pre-Reformation. Passing Honnington Park, where is a house built by the Parkers in the time of William of Orange, one is soon in the little market town of Shipston that has exchanged its position as the terminus of a horse tram in the time of the Regency for the terminus of a branch line from Stratford, which has followed us all the way here.

I have been in Shipston many times, but have never discovered anything in its quiet streets beyond the necessities of meat and drink, and on one occasion a drenching rain to detain me. It belongs to the county of Worcester, and the country all about takes on a more broken character, merging gradually into the Cotswolds. The head waters of the Stour, too, above the town, are natural trout streams, and the characteristics of that Cotswold country, with which we are not concerned here, are strongly in evidence. I was glad enough on this boisterous occasion to turn with the wind, which continued in all its violence, though it held up the rain, and face eastward for the secluded hills and hollows amid which Compton Winyates lies in peaceful isolation. This is not by any means the shortest way from Stratford, but I was anxious to see Brailes, whose large church forms a notable landmark in the plain from any one of the many surrounding heights over which roads climb. Brailes Church is often styled the "Cathedral of the Feldon", and is in fact over 160 feet long, and possesses a noble and massive fifteenth century tower 120 feet high, with an embattled parapet and pinnacles. Some thirteenth century lancets, triplets in the south aisle, are the oldest work in the church. There is also a fine clerestory to the nave, with twelve square-

headed two-light windows. The chancel is fourteenth century with a particularly fine east window in the decorated style of five lights and graceful tracery. A lofty perpendicular arch opens into the tower at the west end, disclosing a fine perpendicular window. Before the altar lie some slabs covering the dust of the Bisshop family, who were patrons of the church in the sixteenth century; but the manor had belonged to the Sheldons, who were great landowners hereabouts, and could ride, it was commonly said, from Brailes to Broadway, where, it may be remembered, we have already met them on their domain.

There is something delightfully snug about the situation of Compton Winyates, though no one of course in these days would build a house in the bottom of a punch bowl. Perhaps, too, the tempestuous state of the weather added something to the attraction. For while the narrow leafy lanes that led up to the brim of the green cup, in whose hollow the beautiful old house lay silent and peaceful, were in an uproar of blowing leaves and hurtling twigs, on getting down to the lawn the lightest possible airs were moving, and one could have lit a match without difficulty. It is not merely that the house lies in a small basin, but the basin contains all that there is of garden lawn, parkland, and grove, the last two spreading up in graceful sheltering sweep from the flat on which the mansion itself, with its old gardens, terraces, and ponds, is set. The whole thing is in a small compass, while all around it is a broken and pretty and altogether aloof-from-the-world sort of country, and the most picturesque corner of Warwickshire. By the road we have travelled in this chapter it is about sixteen miles from Stratford. From whichever side you approach it, its beautiful

chimney stacks and mellow red walls burst on you suddenly at close quarters, and though always above it, the effect is nevertheless singularly felicitous.

A more beautiful display of battlement and gable, of grey roof and twisted chimney, of irregular yet symmetrical grouping of towers and turrets, of Tudor windows of every size and form of beauty, it would be difficult to conceive. And when one remembers that the whole house was built in the early years of Henry VIII, despite the familiar glories of the Tudor builders, one is almost startled at the thought that men who had lived through the dark period of the Wars of the Roses could survive to see such a triumph of domestic architecture as this, and that, too, reared like this one in the very heart of the country. Built, with the exception of the gateway block, of brick that has acquired the tone and colouring every one is familiar with in Hampton Court and some Cambridge colleges, a charming extraneous touch is further given by the clematis, roses, and ivy, which with due discrimination are permitted to flourish here and there without damage to the lines of the fabric or the colour effect of wall and tower.

Set round a quadrangle nearly 60 feet square, the house gathers further size and dignity in its outside view from this design. It is, moreover, so picturesquely varied in its external detail that its appearance at each of the four sides is quite distinct. Over the great embattled front porch, in which the original oak door remains, are the arms of Henry VIII, supported by a griffin and a greyhound, and surmounted by a crown, with those of Catherine of Aragon in one of the spandrels. To take the reader through the many and beautiful halls and chambers, the intricate mazes, with their hiding-holes of this superb

old house is not my purpose. But the additions have been so slight, the restoration so limited and so careful, that the visitor may fairly picture himself in actual touch with the highest domestic aspirations of the early Tudor period. Personal history is always more interesting in the narration than architecture, and should be so. The one is meant to look at, the other only lives in story, and that of the rise of the Comptons to supreme position has a touch of both humour and romance in it which has kept it locally green. Here, again, we have the old, old English story, and one scarcely known upon the Continent of Europe—the marriage, that is to say, of the noble to the trader's daughter.

The Comptons were not by any means new people. One of them was knight of the shire in the time of Edward III, but they got no further than that till another became ward of the Crown as a boy, and was brought up with Henry VIII. The prince took a fancy to him, and when he came to the throne gave him the custody of the park and ruinous castle of Fullbrook, near Warwick, which had been built by the Duke of Bedford, of French war fame, and son of Henry V. Compton owned the land at Winyates, a corruption of "Vineyards", and utilized his stewardship, no doubt legitimately, by hauling the material from Fullbrook, and building the noble house for which remote posterity, as well as his own descendants, have to thank him. Not every one who has pulled down castles and monasteries has made such good use of them. The chimneys, says tradition, were conveyed there in panniers carried by donkeys. His grandson Henry was created Baron Compton of Compton by Queen Elizabeth in 1572, and visited by her the same year; the chamber in which she lay, as well as that

tenanted by her father at an earlier date, being duly cherished. It was Henry's son, William, however, in the last year of the century who fell in love with Alderman Spencer's daughter.

This gentleman, commonly known as "rich Spencer", quite in twentieth century fashion thought his daughter could make a better match, and absolutely refused to sanction this one. Thus thwarted, the resourceful gallant bribed the alderman's baker to let him take his place one morning. So young Compton, thus disguised, carried the daily supply of loaves to the Spencer establishment at so prompt and early an hour that, meeting its master accidentally, he was presented with a sixpence and a word of commendation on his meritorious punctuality. When the pseudo baker, however, had deposited his loaves, the young lady took their place in the basket and was carried away by her triumphant lover. The triumph, however, was sadly marred by the unappeasable wrath of the outraged parent, who promptly proceeded to disinherit his daughter, in spite of the fact that she had been duly and lawfully united to the adventurous nobleman. Disinherited, too, she would apparently have remained if it had not been for the good offices of Queen Elizabeth, whose sympathy, even in her old age, with the enterprises of thwarted lovers was notorious. For when the first child was born, Her Majesty, without entering into particulars, paid Sir John the compliment of asking him to stand co-sponsor with her at the baptism of an infant protégé, stipulating that he should also adopt it. The astute merchant fell into the trap and found himself at the font in the capacity of adopted parent of his own grandson, and all went happily ever after. At any rate, the money did, and enriched the lords of Winyates to the enormous extent for those

days of not less than £300,000. Shakespeare, we are told, with that curious air of confidential intimacy with the mysterious genius affected by the lighter-hearted Stratfordian annalist, knew the story well, and utilized it in the scene of Falstaff and the linen basket in " The Merry Wives of Windsor ".

Shakespeare, by ordinary inference, must of course have known the story ; but the device in various shapes is as old as the hills, and there is a little hitch, too, here as to whether the play in question was not written some time before the Spencer-Compton escapade. A few years afterwards James I, while on a visit to Compton Winyates, which had been thus honoured both by Henry VIII and Elizabeth, created the fortunate owner Earl of Northampton. The room occupied by the former bears his name, and the window still contains some old stained glass exhibiting the Tudor rose and the arms of Catherine of Aragon. Charles I was also a visitor here, and his chamber, with a spiral staircase opening out of it, is held in remembrance. The house was seized and held by the Parliamentary troops for most of the Civil War and not seriously besieged.

Not a soul was about on the occasion of my visit, and down in this strangely sheltered hollow the perfect silence of the old house made an impressive contrast to the agonized tossing of the woods which crested the near sheltering ridge and the roaring of the wind in the great elms that stood high enough to feel its force.

The church which stands near by in the grounds was only built after the Restoration, in place of one destroyed during the Civil War ; but some of the old monuments were recovered and still survive beside those of later date. Among the former is an effigy of the builder of the house, Sir William Compton, with

that of his wife. Another is his grandson, Henry, first Baron Compton, who was one of the judges at the trial of Mary Queen of Scots, with both his wives. Many, too, of the Spencers of Althorpe are lying here with family banners and hatchments. Under one of the former, that of Peter Compton, who died in 1542, hangs a surcoat and a helmet. By way of contrast at the west end of the church is the grave of one Jane Story, a reputed witch who died in 1753.

The battle-field of Edgehill is some five miles from here,and the way thither lies through such a sequestered region for this somewhat populous heart of England that its memory always abides with me as a pleasurable departure in this particular. The long ridge, in fact, which terminates in such abrupt and conspicuous fashion where the battle was fought, and more particularly appropriates on that account the famous name, stretches nearly to Compton Winyates. Indeed, I took the road that mounts up on to it almost immediately by the advice of a rustic rather than the alternative of slipping down into the valley and travelling along its foot. By this method, however, one misses the village of Tysoe, which not only possesses an interesting and ancient church, but witnessed the meeting of Charles I and his queen, after a long separation, at a moment in October 1643 so auspicious for their arms, that a medal was struck to commemorate a reunion so doubly fortunate.

The ridge road here, lifted some 500 feet above the lowland of Warwickshire, though now and again giving the traveller the benefit of outlook incident to its elevation, is thrust for the most part so far back on the plateau that no great advantage of this kind in fact attaches to it. As there seems little traffic here of any sort, the note perhaps is scarcely worth

making. For myself, I pursued this solitary trail at peace with the wind, which was now beginning to tire, and was in any case behind me. Persistently it forged along, apparently untravelled and certainly undwelt upon, and for the most part fenced about with tall and never-ending screens of overgrown hedge timber, where specimens of every normal woodland tree known in England seemed struggling for mastery in a delightful chaos, festooned with autumn berries and all bustling with feasting birds. It reminded me of my Roman road near Evesham, and wore the same alluring air of being altogether outside the scheme of things. Indeed, I began to think it was, and to wonder whither it was leading me, or whether so deserted a highway could possibly land one at a haunt so well known as Edgehill. At length, however, we emerged into civilization and upon the outskirts of a large farm, and not far beyond it the tower which commemorates the battle came in sight.

The ridge upon which Charles I camped the night before, and from which in the morning he descended to fight the first big battle of the war, is from even a mere physical point of view the most striking spot in the Midlands. Hills, heights, ridges, and valleys, as familiar features on paper in the plan and story of famous battles, are apt to shrivel sadly at close quarters. But there is no mistake about Edgehill. The country at the back—to the southward, that is in the direction of Banbury and Oxford—trends by slow degrees to an altitude of at this point about 700 feet and then falls precipitately into the plain.

Among a group of houses, one or two of which are associated with the entertainment of the numerous visitors who come here, is a quite unconvincing looking battlemented tower of considerable height. What-

ever its failures to achieve a mediaeval aspect, having been erected in the eighteenth century, it has the saving merit of providing you from its summit, which is reached by many stairs, with a prodigiously expansive view, and a further one of occupying the very spot where the Royal Standard was planted on the morning of the fight. With regard to the first, considering the atmospheric conditions under which I tested it, I have to take on faith the statement that you can see such widely sundered shires as those of Bucks, and Brecon of Nottingham, and Cheshire; but I am quite sure it is true, though the association of the first two, if one did not know the topography of these parts, is calculated to put something of a strain on the credibility.

For myself, however, the presence of the famous battle-field was the overmastering sensation of the moment, though the surprise of finding it so infinitely more dramatic in situation than distant views of Edgehill had lead one to suppose, added no little to one's historic emotions. The steep declivity leading to the battle-plain, which last spreads away towards Kineton, is now clad with large timber, and the fact of looking down on to it over the tops of their luxuriant foliage contributes sensibly to the allurements of the spot as well as to the sense of commanding altitude so strikingly experienced. The battle of Edgehill was fought upon Sunday, 23rd October 1642. The King's Standard had been raised in the preceding August at Nottingham, whence he had moved westward to Shrewsbury with a view of augmenting his forces in the strong Loyalist counties of the Welsh borderland. Essex, commanding the Parliamentary forces, had in the meanwhile moved forward as far as Worcester. But when the king started on his

march for London, which city was his objective point, Essex abandoned Worcester with the intention of intercepting him, and the two armies finally came face to face upon this henceforward memorable spot. That of the king spent the preceding night upon the high ground, that of Essex lay in and about Kineton, a large village some two miles from the ridge foot.

The king had rather the advantage in numbers at the moment, some 14,000 foot and 4000 horse. Essex intended to remain over Sunday at Kineton till another division of horse, foot, and artillery came up which would have about equalized matters. This state of things, however, was discovered by Rupert, who was practically, though not literally, chief in command, and it was decided to seize the opportunity. The Royal army then mustered from its various encampments, and marching to the brink of the ridge formed up in sight of the enemy, which at the same time were moving out from Kineton and extending themselves in the plain below, a stretch of open common land with scarcely an enclosure upon it. Charles did not abandon a strong position from folly, like the Scots at Dunbar a few years later, or like his ancestor James IV of Scotland at Flodden in the preceding century because he was cut off from his base, but simply because Essex had no inducement to scale the heights, being in no hurry, while the king was, for the reasons above stated. So at one o'clock in the afternoon the Royal army marched down the hill and the others prepared to meet them.

There are in truth no slight points of resemblance between the first impact of these two amateur armies and of those which, across the Atlantic a little more than two centuries later, met at the first battle of Manassas. The professional element was so small in

both as to count for little. In the later conflict, though the points in dispute had of course scarcely anything in common, the sides, their backbone at any rate, represented the Puritan element very distinctly on the one hand and the cavalier element almost as faithfully upon the other. As in the older war, too, one party to the American struggle had the advantage of being more generally accustomed to the saddle and to fire-arms than their opponents, and curiously enough in each case the possessors of these physical advantages were the ultimate losers. But I was thinking rather of the drift of the two fights and the conduct of the combatants. I admit that my impressions of Bull Run are drawn mainly from personal friends and acquaintances, and those not a few who fought in it. Nor were their reminiscences those of a day or a week or even a year. I heard them very often and could not have got away from them even had I wished to, and I fear, with the impatience of youth, though no bad listener I am now thankful to say, I should have been occasionally not sorry to escape. What would one now give for only an hour with some of the men or officers who fought under Rupert and Essex! But in regard to the first battle of Manassas, my friends were all on the victorious side, while Edgehill was of course a drawn battle. They were quite candid as to their glorious confusion concerning the progress of the events upon that famous day in which they were taking a hand. The English professional soldier, the officer, that is to say, makes it almost a point of honour not to talk about his battles first or last. But the southern gentlemen farmers and lawyers, as well as the host of more rustic persons, who were all rushed headlong into a big battle from a life inconceivably remote from all

wars or echoes of wars, however hardened they afterwards became, never forgot those first impressions, and seldom tired of reverting to them. Both Edgehill and Bull Run were battles between amateurs, representing something the same divergent qualities. The result of the one, to be sure, was facilitated by a panic, while the other in a fashion was fought out. But that is a detail: nor is it of much consequence that the English gentry of that day were trained to the sword and warhorse as part of their education, whereas the southern planter's equipment was that rather of a well-to-do English farmer. He could ride and was familiar with, though not generally dexterous in, the use of fire-arms, and he never became a swordsman. How should he? The swords of one well-known southern cavalry regiment, several of whom I knew well in after days, including their colonel, were never even ground!

Rupert was on the top of the hill with his cavalry, says Clarendon, early in the morning and gave the first intimation to Essex that a battle was inevitable, but many of their regiments were so far back that it was one o'clock when the Royal army descended into the plain, and three before the armies engaged. The sympathies of the country people in this part were strongly with the Parliament, though Clarendon attributes this to the reports industriously circulated of the ferocity and licentiousness of the Cavaliers, for which at present there was no grounds, everything being studiously paid for. Later on, when "war had to support war", the terror with which either side were regarded left a little, to be sure, but not much, to choose between them.

Essex disposed his line of battle about a mile and a quarter on the hither side of Kineton, his left just

crossing the Banbury road, along which we shall return in this chapter to Stratford. The Royal army being the larger overlapped him by a little—the flanks of both upon the other or south-western extremity of the field resting on a small brook that runs parallel to the second main road from Edgehill to Kineton, which is the Banbury road from Stratford. It would be quite accurate enough for the visitor to picture both armies facing each other midway between the hill and Kineton, and just filling the space between the two main roads, each with a frontage of something over a mile.

The king, arrayed in armour overlaid with a mantle of black velvet, rode along the lines and addressed his men, after which the battle opened with the usual artillery duel of that and later days. There was not much more than two hours of daylight left, and the King's Horse, both on the right, under Prince Rupert, and on the left, under Wilmot, proceeded to charge the enemy. Rupert had almost immediate success, riding down with ease the raw troopers who had scarcely learned as yet to sit a horse or fire a pistol, much less wield a sword. Wilmot, after a little more resistance, was equally successful, and the discomfited cavalry, breaking the ranks behind them, carried most of them away in headlong flight. The desertion, too, at the opening of the first charge of the inappropriately named Sir Faithful Fortescue, with his regiment from the Parliamentary ranks, increased the dismay of their horse and such infantry as they carried with them. The impetuous and reckless Rupert had his eye alone on the baggage carts of the enemy, drawn up in tempting fashion in the village of Kineton, and his victorious horsemen fell to plundering as if the battle were over. This was very far indeed from being the case, for with

scarcely any cavalry left to oppose him, Essex sent his reserve of horse right through his enemy's line and, backed by the officers of the broken regiments who had all scorned to fly, and the infantry of his centre, attacked the King's Foot with impetuosity and success. The king behaved with great courage, riding back and forth amid the ranks, encouraging his men, who were being hardly pressed, as the cream of his army was of course his cavalry, and he was, moreover, being attacked both in front and on the flanks. Lindsay, his chief in command, was cut down and borne dying from the field by Essex's men. Sir Edmund Verney, his standard-bearer, was killed and the flag itself captured, to be regained, however, by a clever ruse of a Royalist captain, who, donning an orange scarf, the badge of the Parliamentary cavalry, rode up to Essex's secretary, who was carrying it, and took it from his hand with the remark that it was not fit for a penman to have the honour of bearing that standard.

When Rupert and the officers of the Royalist cavalry, with the portions of their regiments, broken not by defeat but by a too easy victory and undisciplined exuberance, checked in their plundering at Kineton by the arrival of Hampden with his three fresh regiments, returned, they found the king in no little danger, even to his own person, from the unbroken squadrons and infantry regiments of Essex which held that part of the field. When the Royalist cavalry, however, got back to their lines they found their friends thrust back to the very foot of Edgehill, before which they were fighting for their lives and hardly pressed. "I can give a good account of the enemy's horse", said Rupert on seeing the critical situation of the rest of the king's army in consequence of his reckless tactics. "Ay", said an officer, with an oath, "and of their

carts too". As to the Royalist cavalry, though they had for the most part returned, they could not be persuaded, says Clarendon, to advance again upon the enemy, from the fact that the broken regiments had got so hopelessly intermingled, that officers who were ready to renew the charge could not find their men, or the men in like heart could not find their officers. A disciplined army even in such case might have soon found leaders and men, but as Clarendon, with all the authority of a contemporary who knew the men and must have talked to scores of them, unmistakably shows, both sides as amateurs were staggered by the very considerable slaughter. Shaken and bewildered no doubt by so sanguinary a first experience, they showed no desire to join issue again. The rapidly fading daylight, moreover, for it was now half-past five, as much perhaps as lack of inclination, settled the matter. To quote again this great writer and delightful stylist, though in details by no means infallible: "In the doubt of all sides, night, the common friend to wearied and dismayed armies, parted them." The actual number of those killed and buried on both sides, though estimated by Clarendon at 5000, seems actually to have been under 2000, a loss severe enough for a two-hours' engagement of probably not much over 30,000 actual combatants. Under modern proportions the wounded would almost have equalled the whole of the remainder of both armies. But the wounded of those days, the badly wounded at least, were fortunately for themselves a trifling minority, whose situation one shudders to contemplate. Among them was the Earl of Lindsay, titular commander of the king's forces. But great men were looked after, and Lindsay was taken by his captors to die in Warwick Castle. Both armies spent the night on and near the

battlefield in unalleviated misery—for there was an exceptionally hard frost and neither shelter nor comfort—in expectation of renewed hostilities in the morning. But the armies faced each other for most of the next day without venturing on the offensive. Both had some politic reasons for their inaction, but to these was undoubtedly added the reaction natural to a first sanguinary battle between citizen soldiers of the same nation who had not yet acquired the rancorous hostility that a protracted warfare engenders. Moreover, reconciliation was not yet abandoned. The king indeed sent an envoy to Essex, who was extremely curt with him. Sir William le Neve, Clarencieux King-at-arms, was the negotiator instructed to offer pardon to all who would lay down their arms, though his mission was as much perhaps to take stock of the enemy and their condition. This motive seemed the more probable one, and Essex, who took the precautions usual in such cases, was in so truculent a mood that the Royal envoy entirely overlooked this object of his expedition and had little or nothing to report upon it when he returned to camp. Ultimately both armies retired, Charles in leisurely fashion towards London, which it will be remembered he nearly reached, and his enemies to Warwick.

There are many incidents and anecdotes told of this famous battle, that one is glad to recall or hear of with the whole field spread out immediately at one's feet. Near Radway old church, for instance, abandoned within easy memory for the new one near by and standing just behind the king's line of battle, Charles himself took up his position. His two sons, then ten and twelve years old, under the protection of the King's physician, Dr. Harvey, of blood-circulation fame, were placed on the heights of Knowle End, the

extremity of Edgehill and just above and behind the right of the Royal position. It is said that the absent-minded medico was so intent on his studies while the fight was raging that several bullets had sung about the ears of himself and his charges before they shifted their position. They must have been sitting in fact just over that portion of the steep still known as Bullet Hill from the hot fire that the Parliamentary regiments, after pushing their opponents back that far, poured into it. Charles spent the night of the battle in a barn just below, and his route from thence back to the hill-top is known as King Charles's Road.

In Radway Church, removed from the old one, is the mutilated effigy of Captain Henry Kingsmill, the second son of a Hampshire knight who was killed, so a tradition has it, because his white horse offered such a tempting mark to the Parliamentary gunners. The monument was erected by his widowed mother nearly thirty years after his death. Two homesteads, known as Thistle Farm and Battle Farm, mark with sufficient accuracy the front of Lord Essex's line, where it should not be forgotten was Oliver Cromwell, then a captain of horse. Just in front of these is a larch coppice called "The Little Grave Ground", where several hundred of the dead were buried. In an adjoining field is "The Great Grave Mound", marked by a wych elm where still larger numbers of corpses are said to have been interred. Right through the old battle-field from these farms to the hill, which it ascends near the tower, is King John's or the Welsh Lane. The latter term has no reference to the Welsh levies which fought on the king's side, but is merely one of those numerous by-ways in the Midlands that were used by their drovers as they brought their black cattle and ponies to the great English fairs.

Never was a battle thrown away with more monstrous folly than this one by Rupert, who with characteristic arrogance refused to take orders from any one but the king himself. He had also an overweening contempt, till time cured it, of the citizen soldiers of the Commonwealth. Again and again this lack of judgment cost the king, who always listened to him, dear. Few would have imagined that the awkward troopers who fled through Kineton at the very sight almost of Rupert's charging squadrons would in four years' time, under an obscure captain of horse, be winning battles by the very terror of their name.

Kineton is a pleasant, old-fashioned looking village or diminutive town. Most of its church save the tower has been rebuilt in recent times, and no particular distinction now belongs to the place, unless the possession of the kennels of the South Warwickshire Hunt may be accounted as one. Proceeding thence, however, on the road to Stratford, one passes in a mile or so, beneath a dense and stately avenue of elms, and almost immediately afterwards traverses the highly ornate demesne of wood and water amid which, within easy view, stands the Georgian mansion, successor to a former one, of the Verneys of Compton Verney. A large sheet of ornamental water, contracted in the middle in hour-glass fashion, is there crossed by our road. What with the fine timber, the undulating parkland, the glistening stretches of water, and the decorative aspect of the bordering hedgerows, the traveller on the highway might almost fancy he had taken a wrong turn, and was heading for the front door of the large porticoed mansion of that complexion which seems to exude Georgian figures, and on a smaller scale was copied so much in the American colonies. The Verneys, of whom Lord Willoughby de Broke is

the head, have been here since 1442, and the house, which was pulled down to make room for the present one, must have been interesting, as it was built by the first of the family. After leaving Compton Verney one passes the lodge gates of Walton Hall of the Mordaunts, another famous Warwickshire family seated here since the time of Henry VIII. This house is quite modern, but as it stands a mile from the lodge at the farther end of a noble avenue reaching the whole of that distance, its architecture is of not much consequence to the passer-by. Soon afterwards the Stratford road traverses the village of Wellesbourne Hastings, and thence emerges into the Avon valley and to scenes concerning which something will have to be said in the next chapter.

CHARLECOTE HALL FROM THE RIVER

CHAPTER X

STRATFORD TO WARWICK

THE direct road from Stratford to Warwick follows the west bank of the Avon and covers about eight miles. On the other bank a slightly longer route proceeds thither by way of Charlecote, Hampton Lucy (by a slight deviation), and Barford. The latter runs over a practically flat country, attractive mainly for the associations attaching to the villages along it. The former for much of the way waves up and down the brink of a high ridge, and has in a marked degree those attributes of stately timber and general atmosphere of accompanying verdure of grass and leaf that distinguishes the Midland highway. Few genuine country roads in England outside the London orbit, I should imagine, are more persistently travelled, with all that is nowadays implied thereby. Possibly before these pages are in print it will have achieved the aim to which most roads seem to be tending, to wit, a face of tar. Materially this will beyond question ameliorate the lot of the average traveller between the two towns. For myself I hold, in common no doubt with innumerable others, that hitherto the chief landscape glory of the shires of Warwick and Northampton has lain in their delightful turf-bordered, elm-shaded highways. Nor is the least essential part of their pleasing effect the firm, white, dry road, itself forging onward in graceful curves,

sometimes opening a new vista every hundred yards, or again pressing forward between some long-drawn half-mile avenue, in gently waving undulations, narrowing in the distance to a ribbon's breadth, and always in most effective contrast to the verdure on which its sharp outlines lie. How this will be when the roads are equipped with a surface of tar, I do not know! The Midlander of sensibility would probably have a good deal to say on the matter, though that is of really no importance, as nothing he could say is likely to make the faintest difference, dust or tar being apparently the alternatives. To those of us, and they must be legion, who feel the sentiment and the charm of hedgerow and timber, such as gathers round a rural English highway, a road of tar, assailing simultaneously both eyes and nose and impregnating the haunts of peace with the ceaseless suggestion of a city gasworks, is not inviting.

However alluring a stretch of Midland highway, as that from Stratford to Warwick still is when traffic has vanished and the autumn tints of late October or early November are in full display, there are plenty of lanes and byways or field paths through which the leisurely pilgrim may still thread his way in peace. Many of the spots worthy of his notice are just off the track, while the roads in the neighbourhood of the Avon on its east bank are in any case less fearsome in the pursuit than those upon the west.

One might wander here far afield with the licence I indulged in during the last chapter. But I do not think that Henley-in-Arden, in spite of its romantic name, its peaceful tree-bordered street, its moderate store of old houses, and very interesting church of Beaudesert is worth another such violent departure. Even though one may take the striking and beauti-

fully placed church of Wootton Wawen, where, as related, William Somerville, the sportsman poet, among other worthies, lies buried, *en route*. In regard to such places as lie about the Avon and more nearly concern us, Shottery, a much modernized village, but boasting the world-famous cottage of Ann Hathaway, nothing more need be said except that besides its reputed association it is an excellent specimen of a sixteenth century house of its class, and does admirable service to thousands of persons from overseas and the fringes of Britain who may have only this opportunity of seeing one in their lives.

Clopton, too, the old seat of the Clopton family so frequently alluded to in these pages, lies on high ground just to the north of Stratford. The house has been almost entirely rebuilt ; the site and the associations of a place where Shakespeare was probably a frequent visitor being all that remain. The Cloptons, who as local landowners date far back into the Middle Ages, became prominent in a lord mayor of the late fifteenth century who built the bridge at Stratford now bearing his name. This celebrity, to whom there is an altar tomb in Stratford Church, was the last of the race. The name, however, was revived by another family in the time of Henry VIII, and it was these Cloptons, of course, who were Shakespeare's neighbours and the owners of New Place both before and after the poet's occupation of it. There is a dubious legend concerning the two daughters of the House of Clopton. One of them is supposed to have been buried alive during the plague in 1564, and the other to have drowned herself in a pond behind the house from disappointed love. Those with a facility for identifying Shakespearean scenes and characters with the poet's actual environment, see Clopton House in the

second scene of the "Taming of the Shrew", and the two hapless young women themselves in the plays of "Romeo and Juliet" and "Hamlet" respectively. But much more interesting than dubious stories of undistinguished young women and guesswork concerning Shakespeare's characters is the fact that Clopton was rented during the months prior to the Gunpowder Plot by young Ambrose Rookwood for its advantages of contiguity to the rest of the conspirators. It must be remembered that Worcestershire and this corner of Warwickshire was a perfect nest of Roman Catholic families. It was among these in great measure that the active members of this momentous plot were recruited, while outside this inner circle the small public who knew that some crisis was impending, but nothing of its nature, and awaited the event with hushed sympathetic expectation, were chiefly represented by the Catholic aristocracy of Worcestershire.

Few people nowadays know anything of the Gunpowder Plot. It is vaguely remembered as the mad impossible scheme of a few half-deranged fanatics. The decline of Guy Fawkes in effigy to the mean, ineffectual scarecrow generally paraded to-day by a mere residue of copper-hunting village urchins, insensibly perhaps helps to fix this impression. Almost forgotten is the hair-breadth escape this was, and what the result would have been had those thirty-six barrels of powder exploded beneath the feet of King, Lords, and Commons. It was only the belated impulse on the part of a single member at the last moment to save a particular individual that averted a catastrophe, the effect of which staggers the imagination. The Guy Fawkes of conventional fancy is a middle-aged plebeian ruffian. The Guido Fawkes of fact was a young man of parts and exceptional

social qualities. All the conspirators save Percy were about or under thirty years of age. They were mostly connected by blood, and in turn allied to all the Catholic families of this part of England.

Catesby, the devisor and promoter of the whole business, was born on one of the family estates at Lapworth near Henley-in-Arden, and was cousin to the Wyntours of Huddington, that moated Tudor manor house still standing half-forsaken about ten miles north of Evesham and fifteen from Stratford. And of all houses where these dark deeds were mooted, between brothers and cousins of otherwise upright life and many virtues, Huddington was the most frequented by them. Catesby was just over thirty, a widower, tall and handsome. Wild in youth, he had for some time abandoned frivolities and devoted himself and his means to alleviating the hardships which the increasing stringency of the penal laws inflicted on the more unfortunate of his own faith. He held the opinion that the ruin of the Catholic families through increasing fines was inevitable, and that even the most desperate alternative was worth the risk. King James was a special object of hostility, as he had secured the Catholic support when claimant for the English throne by definite promises of liberal treatment which he had more than broken. Catesby was a man of extraordinary magnetism, though of little eloquence, and won over friend after friend who heard the details of his scheme for the first time with horror. The younger Wyntour of Huddington, a brave soldierly man of the world, was his first convert and most effective ally. The elder and squire, a well-meaning, peaceable, weakish, family man, was among the pathetic instances of members of the inner ring who were

drawn into it against their will and better judgment, only to die a dreadful death. It is an intricate and thrilling story, too good perhaps to spoil by compression, too long to treat of here effectively.

The two Wrights were cousins of the Wyntours. Grant of Northbrook, the site of which house lies farther on nearer the Warwick road, was a brother-in-law. The Lyttletons of Hagley and Holbeach, who were involved, were also cousins. In the same circle of affinities, too, were the Habingtons of Hindlip, and the Talbots of Grafton, which last mansion is still in great part standing and occupied. Both kept out of the plot, but the Squire of Hindlip gave sanctuary in his huge, rambling rabbit-warren of a house to certain priests and other humbler men more deeply implicated, and was condemned to death, but at the last moment reprieved on condition of confining his movements to his native county for the rest of his life. This happily extended to forty years, during which the excellent man collected the materials for a history of Worcestershire, which were simply invaluable to the Rev. Treadway Nash, whose two-volumed chronicle, published in the next century, is a local classic.

Young Ambrose Rookwood, who domiciled himself here at Clopton for the time, placed his famous stud of horses at the disposal of the conspiracy, so did another wealthy young Catholic, Everard Digby of Norfolk, who joined the inner circle and occupied Coughton Hall, the seat of the Throckmortons, a few miles to the northward, for the critical period of the undertaking. Here the two priests chiefly implicated, though probably not aware, like many of the outer ring, of the wholesale murderous intention of the scheme, Greenway and Garnet, with Mrs. Brooksby

and the daughters of Lord Vaux of Harrowden, awaited the news which was brought them by Bates, Catesby's servant, in a letter from Digby.

On the 3rd of November, the night which witnessed the arrest of Fawkes actually among his powder barrels, the plot had been hatched or hatching for a year. One after another members of the large West Midland Catholic clan and their friends had been drawn, some almost forced, in. Grant of Northbrook was probably over-persuaded, and but half-willingly committed to the terrible enterprise with its prodigious risks. But once committed there was no turning, no *via media*, and nothing for it but to go through to the bitter end. Wonderful sang-froid was exhibited by some of the leaders and promoters during the months when Fawkes, Thomas Wyntour, the Wrights, Percy, and Catesby were slowly, with closed doors and windows, working their way through the foundation walls of the empty house in Westminster before the more convenient coal cellar became by an accident available. Catesby, for instance, went to Bath to drink the waters, while there were constant gatherings at Huddington, Clopton, and Northbrook.

The great hunt meeting had been arranged for the fifth on Dunsmuir Heath, towards Rugby, where the initiated and the half-initiated were to await messengers from London hurrying by relays of horses with the result of the plot. At Catholic houses like Grafton, parties were gathered for the tryst, mostly persons not yet implicated and without any clear idea of what portended. At the inns in Rugby too, other expectant souls were forgathered, no man being sure of how much his fellow knew. But we know what manner of news it was that came at headlong

speed over the muddy roads from London in the dark hours of that November night and morning, and how the half-formed hunt meeting melted like snow before the bomb that fell among them, every man to take such steps as the measure of his guilt or innocence prompted. It is fortunate we have every detail of the drama preserved to us by the mouths of some five hundred witnesses who were examined in connection with it. The most stirring feature of it was the ride for life through the deep wintry roads of Warwick and Worcestershire by the score or so of men, gentlemen, and servants who knew they were doomed, with the sheriff and his horsemen at their heels. At Warwick, Catesby seized the entire stock of a horse-dealer in place of their own exhausted animals. The elder Wyntour demurred, urging that such high-handed measures might diminish what chance of pardon there might yet exist for some of them. "What! hast thou any hope, Robin ? " was the cynical and, under the circumstances, unfeeling answer. " I assure thee there is none that knoweth of this action but shall perish ". Riding on to Grant's house at Northbrook, where arms had been stored, they provided themselves to the full so far as arms could serve them, and, refreshed by a hurried meal, splashed on through clay roads, miry and water-logged by continuous rains, to central Worcestershire, leaving the distracted inmates of both Clopton and Coughton on the left to hug their fears and await the worst.

Tired, wet, and hungry, the fugitives arrived at Huddington by evening. Lady Wyntour, says local tradition, had been sitting all day in the upper window at the gable end (still there), waiting for a horseman from London to top the near ridge, and, by preconcerted signal with his hat, to intimate the nature of

the fateful news he bore. But the hunted men brought their own tale too surely with them. The little Tudor manor house, though virtually perfect, is now the decadent-looking abode of a farm labourer's family. The dining-room is still intact where the always hospitable board was hastily spread, and for the last time in the annals of a long-descended and conspicuous family. There were no formalities, we may be sure, and little gaiety in that grim, mud-stained band as they snatched their hasty meal, nor any pother about clean sheets as they flung themselves down, so we are told, for a brief sleep. Time was snatched, however, for the celebration of the Holy Communion, which was administered in the room above by Father Hart. Pressing on again, the fugitives headed for Wales, with vague hopes of escaping through its mountains to the sea coast, four riding in front and four behind to ensure against desertion.

Lord Windsor's house at Tardebig was their next halting-place, and here the country people gathered about them in menacing fashion, shouting, " God save the king and country ". " We, too, are for the country ", replied the fugitives, " but not for the king ". Thence, with Sir Richard Walsh, Sheriff of Worcestershire, who had taken up the running, at their heels, they pushed on through north Worcestershire by Burgot, Clent, and Hagley, crossed the swollen fords of the Stour, and reached Stephen Lyttleton's manor of Holbeach at midnight. Many desertions had taken place in the last stage, among them Ambrose Rookwood, Stephen Lyttleton, and Robert Wyntour, but to small purpose for the deserters. At Holbeach the survivors decided that there was nothing for it now but to sell their lives as dearly as possible. And when the sheriff, with a sufficient force, surrounded the

house in the early morning, this, according to the evidence of Thomas Wyntour, is how they did it. "'Stand by me, Tom,' said Catesby, as we went out to meet them, 'and we will die together.' So we stood close together, Mr. Percy, Mr. Catesby, and myself, and they two were shot, so far as I could see, with one bullet. Then the company entered upon me, hurt me in the belly with a pick, and gave me other wounds, until one came behind me and caught me in both arms."

So ended, with the subsequent hanging and quartering, an apparently mad and obviously wicked enterprise. Yet the catastrophe was averted by a mere accident, in the belated anxiety for the life of a connection on the part of Francis Tresham, one of the conspirators, which took the form of a letter that even then might well have passed unnoticed. As to the monstrous criminality of the proceeding, one is forced to remember that all the potential criminals were men above the average in respectability, courage, and morals. It is a little singular too that, while almost every Warwickshire worthy who was a mere contemporary of Shakespeare is dragged into the light with small regard to his qualities and not much to his distance from Stratford, I do not remember to have seen it ever noticed that the poet must have been almost rubbing shoulders with gunpowder plotters in the hey-day of his local importance as the owner of the big house of Stratford; that the house, which in Stratford literature is chiefly celebrated as his almost certain and frequent place of call, was occupied for part of that time by Ambrose Rookwood himself with his long string of horses which were pressed into the service of the memorable tragedy.

Welcombe Lodge is another place of note, standing

pleasantly between hills above the Warwick road. The house itself, the property of that distinguished Northumbrian and gifted writer, Sir George Trevelyan, is new, but it covers the site of an older one, wherein abode William Combe, the nephew of John Combe and a friend of Shakespeare's. Upon the hill above is a conspicuous obelisk to the builder of the present house, who was a gentleman of worth and some political distinction.

Sometimes the now disappearing fashion of placing lofty monuments on hill-tops to departed relatives or local worthies touches succeeding generations with a sense of flamboyant incongruity, which is the more painful since the object is irremovable. In a parish known to me there is a prodigious monument nearly 80 feet high, erected by impulsive filial piety to a singularly undistinguished if excellent country squire. It is extraordinarily unsymmetrical and crude in appearance, looming like an overgrown mine chimney on the top of a ridge over half a picturesque county. I feel quite sure that the grandchildren of the commemorated one, still seated within sight of it, if only for the things that are said by frank and incautious visitors, would in their heart of hearts feel thankful to any one who would explode a sufficient charge of dynamite at its base. The enthusiastic lover of nature and landscape, however, the only possible ally they could hope for, is not usually on terms with explosives.

Another one, less portentous than this, but equally conspicuous on the crest of a bare and lofty hill, though comparatively modern, has already lost its local connection which, as a matter of fact, was never truly of the soil, in this case northern.

"Who is that obelisk to?" said a distinguished British general to a local acquaintance of mine, who

was driving him about the country. On hearing that it was the tribute of a family, already almost forgotten, to the glorious memory of a relative who had taken a prominent part in some branch of the military supply department half a century since, the great man's gall rose. "What! that d——d scoundrel! Why! he'd have been in jail if he'd lived". Beyond doubt there are obelisks and obelisks, but even those of the virtuous and the brave are slightly arrogant and certainly not harmonious notes in a rural landscape. With a reservation perhaps in favour of great national heroes, the others might be erected in unconspicuous glades, where the relatives and descendants could drop the tributary tear, if they felt like it, in comparative privacy.

Snitterfield, though in the direction of Warwick, lies aloof from the dust-deep highway thither, and is a distinctly attractive village set upon the slope of quite a high ridge. It contains among much that is modern a good deal that is old, for it is of considerable size, being, moreover, umbrageous in the best Warwickshire style, and rich, not merely in elms of noble girth and height but in oak and ash besides, each in their way of equal dignity. The flavour of the place seems quite in keeping with the fact that many of Shakespeare's relatives abode here—his grandfather and his uncle, most certainly the latter, since he is recorded as paying a fine for allowing the ditches on his holding, which still bears the same name, to fall into disrepair.

The church, a combination of Decorated and Perpendicular, is most interesting perhaps for the seventeenth century woodwork of the pulpit and altar rails. Its vicar in the middle of the eighteenth century was Richard Jago, a well-known Warwickshire poet of that

day, who lies buried here, while the vicarage in which he wrote is a picturesque old gabled building. Three silver birch trees, planted on the lawn by the poet-parson's daughters, and known as "the three ladies", are features of perhaps too strictly local interest to stir our emotions. But they take rank as notable objects and are shown to the tourist in this perhaps slightly self-conscious corner of the country. Much better than the birch trees, however, is the "King's Lane", down which the disguised Prince Charles rode when a fugitive from the battle of Worcester with his preserver, Miss Lane, seated behind him. This courageous lady was the daughter of Colonel Lane of Bentley, near Walsall. No question of gallantry or personal feeling entered into this wonderful and romantic alliance, one of loyalty pure and simple. She was engaged at the time to Sir Clement Fisher of Packington Hall, in the neighbourhood, whom in due course she married.

From the top of the village and the quiet road leading down to the main artery, along which the dust-clouds and the roar of record-breaking tourists, and the whiz of globe-trotters whirl and throb, the outlook is beautiful and spacious. We have seen the same view more or less from different points ever since leaving Evesham, a glowing, undulating plain at this season, all reds and browns and golds and greens. Our old friends of Bredon and the Cotswolds and Meon Hill are away to the right, while facing us is the long level wall of Edge-hill. In the middle distance, but not so conspicuous between Stratford and Warwick, twists and turns the Avon's willowy course. From the point where the Snitterfield road joins the Warwick highway, there is nothing worth recording unless it be a second really beautiful outlook over the Avon valley to the Oxford-shire uplands, with a more easterly cast in it than the

other. This is just before the main road drops from its high ridge to run in dull fashion along the flat to the high-perched and distinguished-looking town of Warwick.

But it is to the traveller who leaves Stratford on the other side of the river, bound for Charlecote and Hampton Lucy, that the Avon, now no longer navigable for the oarsman, chiefly reveals itself. With rare interludes, however, it is no longer a stream so worthy of your perseverance as in the lower reaches, though most of the places near its banks, already mentioned, have some measure of notoriety. Charlecote, lying in a large level park sprinkled with fine elms and watered both by the Avon and its tributary the Wellesbourne brook, which rises on the battlefield of Edgehill, though greatly altered and added to, is still a noble specimen of a Tudor house. It is not open to the public, but the wayfarer from many lands loves to gaze on the exterior, which indeed is worth a long inspection, and to recall that Justice Shallow, who long ago intimidated rural misdemeanants, including Shakespeare himself, within its walls, or to watch the deer that might be the lineal descendants of the very buck which is supposed to have had a hand in shaping the Bard of Avon's destiny. There is a hitch, however, in the practical certainty that there were no deer at Charlecote, and that Shakespeare's predatory enterprises, if such he made, were directed against a herd at Fulbroke, across the river, formerly a Crown domain and containing a castle, the stones from which, it may be remembered, were hauled away for the building of Compton Winyates. In extenuation of the Shakespeare incident and the poet's morals, visitors are sometimes reminded by the local and other literature that deer-poaching was an offence frequently committed even by gentlemen. This is, I think, a slight inaccuracy.

It is quite true that in the great forests and " chases " where large herds of deer wandered uncontrolled over the neighbouring farms and properties of other people, as at Cranborne for instance, but were nevertheless sacred in the eyes of the law, deer-hunting and the consequent fracas with keepers became a favourite pastime of the " younger son " element, whose families, together with those of the farmers, were sufferers without redress. But the emparked and paled-in herds of country squires were not, I think, looked on as fair subjects of slaughter by their neighbour's sons and nephews. But Shakespearean authorities are all agreed that the poet, for some reason or other, revenged himself on Squire Lucy by the portrayal of Justice Shallow. The Lucys have been a prodigiously long time at Charlecote, though shifting in this generation and perhaps in others to the distaff side in blood. For the village was granted by no less remote a notability than Simon de Montfort to one Walter de Charlecote, whose people may have been conspicuous for Heaven knows how long before that. It was he who first took that name of Lucy which has been so absolute here, and so notable in a good many other places I could recall without even a reference, ever since. Their family history, however, we will not pursue, but note for a moment the beautiful Elizabethan gate-house with turrets and dome-roofs that carries one's thoughts at once to that other great Tudor house not twenty miles away, near Droitwich, which the Pakington family, its builders, have only just lost.

Charlecote was completed in the year of the great Eliza's accession, and the porch, it is said, was hurriedly completed to do honour to the State visit she paid here. It is to be feared if the British workman of to-day was thus pressed and temporarily deprived

of, say, two out of his five meals a day, his work would not endure for 350 years! Like many other famous Tudor houses, the mellow red brick of which this one is built lends additional charm to the glorious mass of gables and turrets which are fortunately among our artist's illustrations. It has been more restored than Compton Winyates, and has not the exceptional and singular quality of snug and peaceful seclusion from the world which there touches the imagination; but Charlecote stands out nobly, as it should do, at the end of a magnificent avenue, in the midst of a green deer park that no plough has touched for centuries, and where deer wander beneath trees that were shedding their leaves no doubt when the guns were thundering at Edgehill over yonder. Though the house is not free to strangers the park may be driven through for a trifling payment. The church, standing near the end of the avenue near the roadside, though tasteful enough, is unfortunately a new one built on the site of an ancient predecessor. Happily the old monuments are intact, and on this account, for those who like the society of Tudor and Jacobean effigies, and have a taste for the company of these eloquently silent knights and ladies whose very clothes and weapons make one think, Charlecote Church is well worth the trouble of getting the key. There are three successive Sir Thomas's here with their ladies. The first of them, stretched on a panelled tomb, is the identical old knight who fell foul of Shakespeare. He lies clad in armour, and must have died (1600) after his old and once humble enemy had become not merely famous in England, but, by that other and mundane standard in which he cherished what seems to us curious ambitions for such a man, a person of some importance in the neighbourhood. His wife Joyce, who predeceased

HAMPTON LUCY

him, lies by his side in the close-fitting cap and gown of the period. Her virtues are set forth by her husband on a slab above. On the panels of the tomb the younger Thomas kneels, already a knight, confronting his sister. He only enjoyed five years of his inheritance when he too was laid out in effigy, his second wife, who survived him more than thirty years, kneeling on a stone cushion near by, attired in a high black gown with a stomacher and ruff. Their son, the third Sir Thomas, reclines under an arcaded canopy resting on four columns. He is in white marble and reclines upon his left elbow, while his wife, in a low-bodied dress and hood, lies beside him. He seems to have been killed by a fall from his horse in the year 1640. If Sir Thomas had been a somewhat lesser man, the manner of death would have suggested Stratford Market. The mortality among the smaller squires, resulting from what was and is still known as "market-peartness," was prodigious. Three generations of Welsh squires of a manor whose story is well known to me were thus successively laid low.

Hampton Lucy, on the farther side of the park, just across the river, owes something to a sonorous and suggestive name, for the church is new, and the bridge which spans the river is of iron. The last fact, however, in no way detracts from the pleasant glimpses of the Avon both up and down, which is afforded from its centre, and though the church is not a century old, it is a very fine specimen of the Decorated style, tastefully embellished within and without. Most of it was built by one of the Lucy family, who was rector of the parish for over half a century. But the village is old enough, and one of the most alluring in the neighbourhood. It was given by Queen Mary, the martyr-making Mary, to the Lucys, who then

added their name to it. It cost this royal and uncompromising devotee nothing, to be sure, for she filched it from the diocese of Worcester, probably as a rap over the knuckles to some non-compliant bishop. She and her husband, Philip of Spain, are commemorated upon a window in the church, where may be seen the coats of arms of this truly miserable pair. A little way up the river towards Stratford on the east bank is Alveston, where is another large, modern, and much less ornamental church. Nearer the river, however, are the remains of its predecessor, consisting of a chancel and a bell-cot heavily draped in ivy. Within it is the effigy of one of Shakespeare's contemporaries, Mr. Nicholas Lane, no doubt of the family who proved such invaluable friends to Charles II. This gentleman, who died in 1595, has been removed from his once recumbent position and propped up against the wall. He is bare-headed, with curly locks, moustached and bearded, and elaborately clad, after the fashion of the day, in ruff, doublet, trunk hose, cuffs, and girt with sword and dagger. On each side a son, both duplicates of their sire, kneels in filial piety.

The Warwick road from Charlecote village runs near the river by Wasperton to Barford, where it crosses the Avon by an eighteenth century bridge to join almost immediately the main Stratford and Warwick highway already alluded to with some feeling. But it is pleasanter to take a leafy byroad that runs from Barford to Warwick, skirting the castle park for a long distance and entering the town over its famous bridge, together with the old Leamington road. This district seems to have wiped out its old churches at more or less the same period with quite startling unanimity. Alveston, Hampton Lucy,

with Wasperton and Barford immediately adjoining them are all new. I know of no such clean sweep anywhere in England. A passion for building must have seized upon the district and upon a generation lacking something surely in a regard for the past. Barford, however, retains its ancient tower upon which are visible shot-marks, said to have been caused by the Parliamentary troops on their way to Edgehill, because the Royal Standard flew from the battlements. The village is a large, substantial, and altogether pleasing one, losing nothing in character by its proximity to the Avon and the fine brick bridge that lifts the main road over it; but I do not think there is anything more of special interest to detain us in it, and the fine presence of Warwick looms near.

CHAPTER XI

WARWICK AND KENILWORTH

THE ancient town of Warwick has beyond all question an air of great distinction. Its pose is admirable, clustering as it does on a ridge lifted up considerably above a virtually flat country. The other Avon towns have all their special charms, but Warwick has singular dignity, as becomes the capital of a great and prominent county. No other town in the Midlands—for Oxford is another affair altogether—approaches it. It is bright and clean too, having, I think, no besmirching industries, the centre merely of a farming and a hunting country. It almost looks as if it were on show, but there is always the quiet stir of an important country town going forward, while shining brass plates on the doors of roomy houses bear the names of firms that suggest substance and time-honoured connections with an extremely solid county. There is nothing dead-alive about Warwick. On the other hand, its activity is of a harmonious kind, and seems in sympathy with the atmosphere of the green and leafy region tributary to it. There is another element, however, and a very important one, which keeps Warwick in decent animation throughout the summer, and that is the tourist. An increasing number of Americans, I am told, make it their head-quarters, Stratford having been over-confident in its monopoly and too venturesome in its charges, an improvidence which, if true, time will cure. Leamington,

WARWICK CASTLE FROM BELOW THE BRIDGE

too, is within a mile or so, and the temptation of the abounding Leamingtonians, with time on their hands, to walk into Warwick and come back by tram must be irresistible. The first serious pedestrian enterprise I ever made in my life was from Leamington to Warwick at the mature age of four. It was along the old road, of course, and the view of the castle from the bridge made such a prodigious impression on my infant mind that the picture remained with me for life; and when I saw it again the other day for the first time, after half a century, it seemed perfectly familiar. This banal bit of personal biography is only justifiable by way of an incidental attestation to the uncommon grandeur of the prospect on entering Warwick from the east. And even from the west, by the Stratford road, the actual entrance to the town is very notable, climbing up as it does to the prominent towers and gables of the Leicester hospital, which have all the air of a gate-house.

But the view of the castle, with its noble array of grey towers and walls springing high above the rich luxuriance of grove and lawn and stream, cannot be suggested by description. Fortunately it need not be, as our artist steps in to better purpose. Once again the little Avon, cunningly magnified to much more than its natural dimensions by the milldam just below, lends itself to furthering the adornment of a town, and that the greatest of the half-dozen that lie on its banks. Boats flit upon its surface, often bright patches of moving colour from the gay apparel of some fair freight, between the tall mantling foliage and the hoary castle walls so imposingly upreared. To the average traveller, British or otherwise, who has in no way soaked himself in mediaeval or Tudor England, and perhaps only knows the country in bits here and there, one castle conveys much the same impression as

another—that of battle, murder, and sudden death, being probably the leading note it strikes. The bigger and more imposing the fortress the more awesome and sanguinary is this suggestion.

But as a matter of fact, to any one equipped with a reasonable grasp of the times, these magnificent specimens of baronial pomp and pride, set in the heart of England, do not speak very loudly of storm and siege. To me at least they suggest rather the " celebrity at home ", the social and family records of great or royal houses, the gorgeous festivals, the wassail and the revelry of the highly placed, in the varying fashion of succeeding epochs. In spite of the invulnerable and bellicose appearance of its exterior, Warwick Castle seems a Windsor rather than a Ludlow or an Alnwick. Of course it took and gave a few blows far back in the Barons' Wars. But its undoubted historic interest gathers little from the stirring scenes that cast a glamour over the great castles of the north and west where the warder neither slumbered nor slept. The watchman on Warwick battlements might have done both with impunity but on very rare occasions. Fancy might not inappropriately think of it as a beautiful suit of tilting armour compared to a coat of mail used in the field. Great men came here to rest from their sanguinary labours, laden betimes with the spoils of far provinces and other countries, to build towers and strengthen bastions against possible faction, or out of mere pride in building, but in this snug heart of England against no definite foe. For this very reason, too, it was a good spot in which to immure captives of distinction in deep and noisome dungeons, while the wine flowed and the wassail proceeded merrily in a gay and quite heartless world above their heads.

Ethelfleda, that daughter of Alfred the Great who

WARWICK CASTLE THE ENTRANCE COURT

must have been a lady of energy for the number of occasions on which she appears in the chronicles, raised a fortification here called the "Dungeon" on an artificial mound within the area of the present castle. Various earls of Warwick did a good deal more in the building way after the Conquest; but whatever this may have amounted to seems to have been wiped out, for the curtain walls and some of the towers were raised in the time of the second and third Edwards. Piers Gaveston, the reckless favourite of a fatuous king, was immured here, and doubtless in the deepest dungeon, if the measure of hatred felt for him by the English nobility counted for anything. Edward the Second's later favourite, Hugh Despenser, became in due course custodian of the castle, and entertained within it the royal author of his temporary good fortune. Thomas de Beauchamp in the next reign wrought the extensive building already alluded to, while his son of the same name added Guy's Tower. Henry the Fifth was entertained here by Richard de Beauchamp, after which a Beauchamp heiress carried the earldom to the famous Richard Neville, the King-maker. Edward IV was brought to Warwick as prisoner by this man of might, on whose death the castle passed to his son-in-law, George, Duke of Clarence. Richard III was here twice, and in Edward the Sixth's reign the property was given to the Dudleys. Ambrose Dudley entertained Elizabeth on two occasions in the castle, but after his death it reverted to the Crown. In 1605, and in a ruinous condition, it was granted to Sir Fulke Greville, a descendant of the Beauchamps, who expended a very large sum in repairs and additions, and James I paid him no less than four visits. This family have held the estates ever since, but the Earldom of Warwick had become alienated to that of Richard, and on the latter dying out in 1759

it was conferred on the Grevilles in the person of Lord Brooke, a title now borne by the eldest son of the house. The Lord Brooke of the time of the Civil War was a Parliamentarian, and the county of Warwick being a stronghold of that party, the castle was only submitted to one brief and irresolute siege. The Earl of Lindsay, it will be remembered, was carried here from the field of Edgehill to die. Of royal and noble persons Warwick in truth has had its fill, and it is as a residence rather than a fortress that it makes its historic appeal.

Warwick Castle is as accessible as a cathedral. It costs a little more, namely, 2s. a head and a gratuity to the gorgeous wight who plants himself so skilfully on a strategic point of exit for its acceptance, when all is over, that it would be a bold man who would pass him by, and for aught I know an unjust one. A substantial following go round at his heels many times a day, and his perorations in each chamber are audible and efficacious. I speak impersonally, for there are no doubt two or three custodians on show duty. One man could not stand it. I do not know what the King-maker would say to it, though some of his sources of revenue were perhaps nothing like so honest, and for anything I know to the contrary this one goes to a hospital.

I admit to some disappointment in my progress through the rooms of Warwick Castle, not because the proportions or decorations of these stately chambers lacked aught, nor because there was a something in the spirit of them not quite in harmony with the atmosphere one would have fain breathed. That, to be sure, is almost inevitable in an occupied residence, above all, the residence of persons who live in the foremost stream of social life. But a house that is a museum of works of art and pictures yields but poor satisfaction to a hurried scramble round. As a matter

WARWICK CASTLE—ITALIAN GARDEN

of fact, save for a picture here and there, or some suggestive relic of the family, the rest of the business in all such places, however interesting, with opportunity and leisure as an abstract entertainment, is out of touch with the mood in which one explores the exterior of an ancient and famous haunt. But there is no question of exploration in Warwick Castle, nor opportunity for dreaming dreams, nor for thinking over canvases or objects here and there conducive to meditation. And it would be quite foolish to expect anything of the kind. Upon the whole, the public, particularly the hustling portion of it, should be thankful to spend half an hour within these historic walls with the comfortable sensation of having paid for it. The awful part of these processions is when the showman—not being of the sensitive nature and breeding of Mr. Henry James, enthusiast, alluded to in an earlier chapter—drops into the bathos natural to his clay, and informs his audience that the escritoire before them is the one on which my lady writes her notes after breakfast, or that the small drawing-room beyond is a place of withdrawal for the family after dinner when there is no company. This is too awful, and indeed I would not swear that any of these appalling lapses occur at all at Warwick Castle. But speaking generally from a pretty wide experience, they are too often part of the cicerone's stock in trade. After all, if a shiver runs down the back of some of us there are many backs in the crowd that experience nothing of the kind. Many people from other countries no doubt get their only glimpse on these occasions of English domestic life, and that too on the highest and most luxurious plane, and many honest English folk undoubtedly regard this as the main part of the show and well worth half a crown, and very naturally.

In rather amusing evidence of the trustworthiness

of tradition, the armour of the redoubtable but rather mythical Guy of Warwick is among the relics at the castle. The industrious and destructive antiquary, however, has pronounced that each piece belongs to a different period, extending from the time of Edward III to that of the Stuarts. The great hall, over 60 feet long, is imposingly equipped with suits and pieces of armour, some of them actually worn by famous persons such as Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester, Graham, Marquis of Montrose, and so forth. There are a goodly number of old masters hanging on the walls of the chambers through which the public are shown, a catalogue of which would not, I think, divert the reader. The hall, however, has a special interest as being the traditional scene of Piers Gaveston's torchlight trial when Guy Beauchamp and his brother earls, raging with the insults he had heaped upon them and the nicknames he had called them, spurned his petitions for mercy and handed him over to the executioner. An utterly illegal business, it may be remembered, as the wretched man was on his way to a formal trial by Parliament when the Earl of Warwick caught him on the road.

The outer gate of the castle is modern, but the way leading thence through the outer court is singularly picturesque, winding through a cutting of solid rock overhung with verdure, and disclosing at its extremity the noble fourteenth century gateway with Guy's and Cæsar's Towers on the right and left respectively. The former, raised at the end of the fourteenth century, is twelve-sided and 128 feet high. Cæsar's Tower is a little earlier and consists of four stories, each with a vaulted roof, and is 20 feet higher than the other. This tower, resting on a rock foundation, is considered a masterpiece of military engineering as regards its

outer face, and the construction and arrangement of the loopholes for archery. It has also a sloping base, from which heavy projectiles, dropped from the machicolated battlements, would rebound with great force into the faces of an enemy. Outside the gateway, on the verge of the drawbridge which once crossed the moat, is a barbican two stories high, with two octagonal turrets loopholed for archers. There is a portcullis to the barbican and also to the gateway, nearly twenty yards in the rear, with every facility for precipitating missiles on the head of a foe who should penetrate the first and attack the second. Within the inner court is a fine grass plot nearly two acres in extent, to which the later and residential part of the castle presents its ivied front and mullioned windows.

The dungeon of a castle—when a firmly established authentic dungeon like that at Warwick beneath Cæsar's Tower—is more effective in its appeal to the emotions than a state drawing-room, or should be, for in descending into such dismal shades one is dropped indeed into the Middle Ages. No change is here, and one breathes the dank smell of a chamber where time has stood absolutely still, and whose pitiless walls and gloomy vaulted roof look so contemptuously indifferent to the flight of years. One thinks of Gaveston again, for there is always something fascinating about that accomplished man who could so outwit in talk the ponderous, slow-thinking, egregiously self-satisfied Anglo-Norman barons, and then proceed to unhorse them in the tilting-ring and beat them at their own game. But Gaveston's brief inconveniences here must have been trifling to the long roll of forgotten sufferers. What wonder when their turn came that revenge must have been the sweetest of the senses and an exhilarating and prolonged joy. There are a great many illegible mementoes of these

unfortunates upon the walls, but the only decipherable names are those of humble persons of later date who had no chance of revenge. One of them is John Smith, gunner to His Majesty, who from his dates spent the whole period of the Civil War here, and never had a chance even to train a gun upon a Roundhead. For the dungeon, however, a special permit is, or was, essential. The Earl of Lindsay, the royal commander at Edgehill, died in Guy's Tower. The view from the spacious gardens of the castle over the finely timbered park, through which the Avon flows, is very charming, while there are of course innumerable things both inside and out to be seen that will be found catalogued in every local handbook.

As I have before remarked, the town of Warwick is a little flattered by its commanding site. As you look westward, in the direction of Stratford, from that end of the High Street where the beautiful old Leicester hospital forms, as it were, one side of the frame to the picture, the green landscape seems to lie far beneath and conveys the effect of standing in more of a hill town than Warwick actually is. This same hospital is, of course, one of the sights of the town and deserves to be. It was mainly built in the reign of Henry VI as a hall for the guilds of St. George and Holy Trinity, and at the Dissolution became the property of the town and was used as a burgess hall. Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester, being seized about the year 1570 with charitable intentions towards old or maimed soldiers of the neighbourhood, persuaded the burgesses to give the hall, while he supplied the funds from parcels of land for the necessary endowment of a master and twelve inmates. Nothing, so far as I am aware, has broken the peaceful possession of successive inmates from that day to this. Some slight deviation from the original

LEICESTER'S HOSPITAL, WARWICK

qualifications has taken place, so I gathered from the chatty and amiable veteran of their number who did the honours for my benefit; but this matters nothing here.

Externally the old hospital, together with one or two adjoining houses of the same date, makes a noble group of clustering gables and chimneys, while the fourteenth century chapel of the old guild, with its battlemented tower and arched roadway beneath it, completes a corner which, together with its commanding situation, is probably not surpassed in any English country town. The hospital forms a quadrangle entered by an arched gateway surmounted with the famous bear and ragged staff. The master's lodge fills one side, also decorated in colour with the same significant badge as well as the porcupine of the Sidneys, to whom the Dudley property, including the patronship of this hospital, came. The carved barge boards of the gables, too, terminate in white bears hugging poles. On another side are two cloister corridors, one above the other. Each inmate has a bedroom and sitting-room and generous allowance, and these quarters of course occupy a good part of the building. But the old banqueting hall remains, though for less worthy uses, and an inscription proclaims the fact that James I was entertained here in 1617 by Sir Fulke Greville, Chancellor of the Exchequer. One is shown, too, a few relics, interesting and otherwise, and some rude bits of old furniture. The chapel is more noteworthy for its exterior and its fine pose, with the old town gateway running underneath it. The interior is quite plain and has been restored, though an old oak screen and a few other articles of the original furniture remain in it. The gateway beneath the chapel has a vaulted roof and is part of the old fortification of the twelfth century, the iron stanchion of the gate being still in situ.

On the northern fringe of the town is a picturesque old house known as the Priory, all that remains of a monastery founded by the first Earl of Warwick and granted at the Dissolution to a retainer of the Dudleys, one Hawkins, who immediately pulled down the monastic buildings and built the present house, which has had many curious vicissitudes of ownership and sheltered many personages of renown. Queen Elizabeth on one occasion paid a surprise visit to the Earl and Countess of Warwick and found them supping here, though their host was confined to his room with the gout, which did not prevent the lively queen from looking him up and no doubt recommending him a prescription. The house, a private residence, was partly rebuilt in the eighteenth century, but still contains some of the old windows, panelled rooms, and the original oak staircase.

But the most distinguished piece of ancient architecture in Warwick, next to the castle, is that of the church of St. Mary, occupying a most conspicuous position and lifting heavenwards a tower that measures to the top of the pinnacles over 170 feet. The word ancient requires some qualification, for in a great fire, which wrought destruction to the town in 1694, the church was ignited and a considerable portion of it so gutted that it had to be rebuilt, the east end and the beautiful building known as the Beauchamp Chapel being almost all of it remaining intact. The tower and nave were rebuilt by a local builder, with a result that causes a stranger encountering so vast and important a building for the first time no little bewilderment. All kinds of curious devices in the shape of window tracery and uncanny ornaments confront him. A little way off the stately proportions of tower and nave are unquestionably imposing, and the more so from their admirable site; but at close quarters the

topical disease of the period breaks out everywhere in the pseudo-classic detail, of which the Williamite and Georgian were obsessed, mingled with the Gothic in grotesque alliance.

One is accustomed to a frank and complete pagan temple like that of St. Chad's at Shrewsbury, which the extraordinary and preposterous taste of the time seemed quite proud to gather in as a place of Christian worship without a thought as to the humours of the situation. But Warwick is a curious blend that is almost more startling. However, this is of no immediate interest. The eastern portion of the church, that happily no local re-builder was needed for, is to the point here. The choir escaped the conflagration and consequently the local artificer, and is probably of the same date as the Beauchamp Chapel opening out of it, the middle, that is, of the fifteenth century. It is lighted by four four-light windows on each side, with panel work below and an east window of similar fashion but of six lights, divided by a transom. The roof of the choir is groined and has four bays, and an angel bearing the shield of the Beauchamps is displayed on each. This handsome roof is further supported by flying ribs, and is altogether a singularly graceful piece of fifteenth century workmanship. In the middle of the choir is a lofty tomb upon which lie in effigy Thomas Beauchamp, Earl of Warwick, the founder, and his wife the daughter of Roger Mortimer, Earl of March, both of whom died in 1369. Around the tomb are thirty or forty figures that are supposed to represent connections of this potent house. The feet of the earl, who is in armour, rest upon a bear, and his hand holds that of his wife, whose feet are on a lamb.

There are some curious mortuary plates in front of the altar, while unmarked near the vestry door lie the remains of William Parr, Marquis of Northampton,

brother to Queen Catherine of that name, who is said in the "Black Book of Warwick" to have died so poor that there was not sufficient wherewith to bury him in accordance with his rank. So he was put in pickle till something could be done. Queen Elizabeth came to the rescue so far as the essentials were concerned, but no one apparently came forward to mark his resting-place with any inscription or memorial. Surely the Parrs were a family of singular ill-luck in this particular, for the like adventures of his sister, Queen Catherine's corpse, at Sudely will be remembered. In an octagonal room near the vestry, supposed to have been the chapter-house, stands a great monument to Fulke, Lord Brooke, which tells us that he was servant to Queen Elizabeth, councillor to King James, and friend to Sir Philip Sidney. He was stabbed by a discontented servant, who then killed himself. A very different individual, and of a very different age, is commemorated by a bust in a niche on the wall of the exceedingly plain nave. This is Walter Savage Landor, the eccentric scholar and poet who was born at Warwick, though a North countryman by descent, and educated at Rugby. Beneath the choir is a crypt, some of the pillars of which are Norman and date from the original twelfth century church. Opening out of the choir is the beautiful Beauchamp Chapel, which would redeem the church from obscurity if the rest of it were cast on the lines of a cotton factory, which is far indeed from being the case.

This building, to which one descends by a flight of steps, was founded upon money left for the purpose by Richard Beauchamp, Earl of Warwick, and occupied the twenty years between 1443 and 1464 in the construction, costing a prodigious sum. It was intended as a mortuary chapel for the testator, and has scarcely a superior in England of its kind. As one descends

into the chapel, which is lower than the church, by a flight of steps, its beautiful proportions and superb decorations display themselves to extraordinary advantage. The east window occupies the whole space of the wall, and filled with the much mutilated and disconnected fragments of the original painted glass is very fine. The two principal mullions as well as the architrave are filled with canopied niches, many of them containing gilt and painted images. The painted glass originally represented the figure of Richard Beauchamp, with those of his wife and children and some famous characters in sacred history. The iconoclasts, whether those of the sixteenth or seventeenth centuries, have not left very much that is intelligible, but the general effect of the window, with its rich ornamentation and tracery, is very striking. Here as everywhere the bear and ragged staff, suggestive of nothing if not the characteristic pride and merciless arrogant egotism of a great mediaeval baron, alternates with the meek heads of saints and emblems of Christian virtue and humility, as if the commemorated grantee had spent his life in washing poor men's feet and offering a second cheek to the smiter. The whole interior of the building, which is about 60 feet long, where not occupied by tombs and windows, is richly panelled and arcaded. The floor is of black and white marble in diamond pattern, the roof groined and of three bays, the work being of a marvellously intricate and ornate character. The side windows are of plain glass, but their tracery in style and decoration is in full harmony with the rest of the building.

With all its grace and beauty this last is not less distinguished for the tombs contained within it. Almost in the centre is the altar tomb of the founder, fashioned of Purbeck marble and surmounted by a curious, open, hooped frame intended to support the

pall, which was of crimson velvet and remained here till a century ago. Beneath this, resplendent in gilt and brass, with bared head resting on a helmet, but otherwise in full armour and his feet upon a muzzled bear and griffin, lies the great man, Richard Beauchamp, Earl of Warwick. The inscription, freely intermingled with bears and staves, tells us among other things that the hero died in 1439 at Rouen, and furthermore, what really does make one think when set forth in matter of fact fashion in cold stone, was " Lieutenant-General and Governor of the Realm of France and Duchy of Normandy ". Around the tomb, standing in fourteen canopied niches, are as many of the living relatives of the deceased fashioned in gilt, among whom, as may be imagined, are the greatest personages of their day. Talbot, Earl of Shrewsbury, is here, and so is Richard Neville, the king-maker, who was to step into the founder's title and possessions through marriage with his heiress.

Near this is another altar tomb on which reposes the effigy of Ambrose Dudley, known as the " Good " Earl of Warwick. The virtue no doubt was his own, the earldom was conferred on him by Queen Elizabeth, being also son and heir to the Duke of Northumberland. He was a brother of Robert, Earl of Leicester, and must, if he deserved his reputation, have been an altogether different kind of person from that shallow egotist. He died childless in 1589, and he too was lieutenant-general, but not governor, for times had sadly altered in the relations of England to the Duchy of Normandy. Against the north wall, in somewhat painful contrast to the quiet and chaste altar tombs of these great men, is the gorgeous erection reared by a decadent taste to a person for whom such a florid departure was not wholly inappropriate, no less a one than Robert, Earl of Leicester, himself. Some one

has called it a " mountain of confectionery ", but there is the structure and the flanking Corinthian columns supporting the massive superstructure. The effigy, like that of the countess by his side, who erected the tomb, is painted to resemble life. The earl is bare-headed, with moustaches and a spade beard. He is in rich armour, over which is thrown the mantle of the Order of the Garter and a fur tippet. Around his neck is a collar of scallop shells and the jewel of the Order of St. Michael of France. Below the knee, as is also the case with the other effigies, is the Order of the Garter. The lady is attired in a ruff and a high gown and a mantle of scarlet and ermine.

Against the south wall of the chapel is a monument to the infant son of the above distinguished couple, Baron Denbigh; and nowhere was Leicester more justly hated than upon those Welsh estates whence he drew his second title. This child was three years of age, and is said to have been deformed. The small effigy, 3 feet 6 inches in length, is richly draped, and the long inscription relating to the brief sojourn of the original thus quaintly opens : " Heere resteth the body of the noble impe Robert of Dudley."

It is not often a building of this size is at once so beautiful and of such distinguished associations with the mighty and powerful, if not always the great, departed. There was no hurry here at least, and I was not only happy in finding the custodian disengaged, but himself one of those occasional officials who possess an enthusiasm for their trust and are equipped with a knowledge of history not limited to their immediate and silent wards and their relatives.

As one passes out of Warwick in the direction of Leamington, it is to descend the slope of the ridge on which the town is set, and to pass under the east gate, upon which is the chapel of St. Peter, originally built

in the time of Henry VI, but badly restored in the eighteenth century. Leamington to-day stretches out its tentacles so far that it is practically united to Warwick. The old road across the river is still fairly rural, but the route of the tram-cars upon the nearer side, which hurtle back and forth between the two towns, may make eminently for convenience but not for the picturesque. Leamington abounds, I believe, in residential advantages, tree-bordered streets, bands, concerts, tennis-clubs, healing waters, educational facilities, and is handy to several packs of hounds. It has its own river too, the Leam, of small volume, to be sure, but sufficient to sensibly reduce that of the Avon above their confluence.

The rise, however, of the place is quite remarkable. In 1800 we are told it had thirty houses. It is now a large residential town akin to Cheltenham and Harrogate. A spring was known of here in Camden's time, but it was not till near the close of the eighteenth century, when several more at various times were discovered, that it began to gather fame and population. Its cup of joy was full when, after a visit from her late Majesty in 1838, a petition to prefix the word *Royal* to the Leamington Spa was graciously acceded to. I fancy the springs themselves nowadays form merely one of the many attractions of the place.

Our American friends are accustomed to express surprise at the immense number of people in this country who live what may be called detached lives on their means, without occupation or responsibilities, and devote themselves mainly to amusement. And Leamington is, I take it, a community where these care-free souls abound. Knowing, I may say, both countries, the diverse points of view on this subject have always interested me not a little, as they are so wide apart ; and I have discussed it in the course

THE QUADRANGLE, LEICESTER'S HOSPITAL, WARWICK

of my life with scores of Americans. An Englishman who hunted four days a week and shot the other two in due season, would resent very much being called an idle man, and his pursuits being stigmatized as trifling. On the contrary, he would most likely consider himself an extremely hard-working person, and his labours of such kind as confer a certain lustre and prestige that does not belong to ordinary plodding success in a profession. I have seldom been able to make my American friends understand this, perhaps from lack of eloquence, or to convince them that to call an existence thus spent, or spent in some similar manner, trifling or a waste of life, would simply be unintelligible to those thus occupied.

In America its old tradition still, I think, survives, and a man, however wealthy, without an occupation is contemned, so much so that the wealthy son of fortune takes an office and affects to frequent it. This arises no doubt from the tradition of a small population with a continent to conquer, further stimulated by the old Puritan dislike of amusement. In its more modern and developed phase it runs perilously near the barbarous and uncivilized notion that money-making is the end and aim of life. But that is evaded in the method of argument, though not perhaps very convincingly. I can support it myself as well as any American, but not to my own satisfaction. An incomplete new country, which has demanded the efforts and called aloud for the energies of every generation of every class, bears no relation to a long filled up country where the sign and seal of the leading class has been to live by other means than work, whatever work, which in Great Britain has happily been immense, they may achieve gratuitously. But leisure, I take it, is the goal of every member of a complete civilization. How he spends

it is wholly his own affair and depends upon his natural gifts. His pleasures may be intellectual, using the term broadly, or material, or very often a happy mixture of both. Does it much matter? It strikes the American as remarkable that thousands of leisured and detached Englishmen can lead a life devoted wholly to play. But a considerable proportion of these very same critics would be quite as incapable of a cultured or partly cultured leisure as the objects of their strictures, and there is no merit whatever in being a stockbroker or a shopkeeper if you can live without it, or in filling commercial situations which unendowed men could fill. But the tradition which cherishes the converse opinion is in America a hardy plant, though contrary to the logic of a perfected civilization. It is a kind of religion that the Almighty intended every bit of the earth's surface to be made profitable, lit with electricity and gridironed with railroads as soon as possible—and that every man who stood aside was doing nothing to further this great end. This in detail would probably be deprecated, but something very like it is at the back of the transatlantic fetish. The local stimulants to such a crude faith have been singularly strong. When transferred to an old country, however, it has a flavour almost grotesque to the native of any class, and entirely incomprehensible. Yet it is so plausible, and if not exposed in its nakedness can be made to sound so wholly admirable and highly moral. But it would be something like a catastrophe if the leisured classes, in which of course no one would include the landowners, the great retired, and the gratuitously busy, were to be precipitated into the crowded high-class labour market if they qualified themselves as the American would have them qualify to compete. They had far better circulate

their safe and happy incomes in frivolous security among British industries, and make a gay patch here and there between Monday and Saturday when everybody else is busy. Americans who have neither cause nor desire to devote themselves to further money-spinning, will tell you to a man that America is still a most uncomfortable country for the person who wants to live in its best civilization, *i.e.* the cities, and has no office down town. Any leisured Englishman who has tried a London suburb can doubtless guess what it means, even without the reproach that in America is superadded. The change in all this is merely a matter of time. The Western hustler thinks he is ahead of things when he preaches on his favourite theme, whereas in truth he is only a growing boy, and behind Europe in the art of living in this sense, an achievement which is a mere question of time. Whether a majority of leisured Englishmen spend their leisure in a manner worthy of their advantages and opportunities seems to me neither here nor there and altogether beside the question.

The real countryman of the older States is far more unsophisticated in matters outside his own immediate environment than a Warwickshire labourer. He has not the faintest notion of what like are European countries or peoples, and what is more, has preconceived ideas, gathered from antiquated ill-constructed school primers which are difficult to shake. Every Englishman familiar with the inside of America knows this, as it is contact with himself that draws forth these wondrous instances of ingenuousness; and any one thus situated could give many almost incredible examples.

"It must be mighty hard living in England", said a quite prosperous freeholder to me one day. "For I reckon the queen (it was in Queen Victoria's time)

takes a tenth of all you make". This excellent person, I am absolutely certain, pictured some royal minion picking out every tenth sheaf from the wagons at harvest-time. An extremely respectable but absolutely common Virginian farmer, whose equally common father had owned nearly a hundred negroes all told, and whom I knew very well, once said to me, "I reckon we correspond to the British aristocracy, and the negroes (then mostly tenants in shares) to the tenant farmers!"

Excellent tobacco-chewing, unshaven, collarless, innocent soul. The parlour-maid of a big Lincolnshire farmer of his day would most emphatically if erroneously have sent him on sight round to the back door had he rung the bell, and her master could have bought his father out easily before the war, negroes and all, and continued to farm and show up smartly turned out in the hunting-field as before—and not greatly inconvenienced; while in education and knowledge of the world comparison would have been ridiculous—I mean with the very frequent type I have in mind.

How should it be otherwise, even among the more enlightened untravelled in a country cut off by 3000 miles of ocean from all the world. No natural shrewdness and intelligence buried in a country district, remote from its own seaports or great cities, avail anything. An English peasant with the same government school education may be slower and duller in some ways, but by comparison he is in the presence constantly of the highest civilization of his own country, and almost in sight of foreign ones. A thousand echoes from outside come to his ears that have more meaning than they would have for a rustic of any kind in Kentucky or Ohio. Even his newspapers are not local, but national, though halfpenny ones. He has probably near relations in

Australia, Canada, India. His village neighbours have often, as soldiers, sailors, marines, been about the world. The great country houses in his neighbourhood, filled with treasures, would astound the other man, but are familiar to him, so are the smart cosmopolitan sort of folks that have come and gone past his door all his life. He has probably himself been to London several times. His children may be servants in more or less big houses. In short, you couldn't surprise the average English rustic, with all his rusticity, by these things, and only in a relative way by taking him to Paris or Berlin. But there are hundreds of thousands of otherwise intelligent American countrymen who would be dumfounded if you took them merely round New York, while as to anything relating to foreign countries, they have absolutely no conception, and, what is worse, they have contracted crude superstitions which make their complacent ignorance seem even deeper. There is nothing strange about all this. It is simply inevitable. But I am not quite sure that many sophisticated Americans realise how forcibly this strikes an alien who knows their country.

To return, however, to this frequented high-road which leads in time past the picturesque sheet of water, beyond whose farther shore the well-known mansion of Guy's Cliff rises in its quaint tiers of tower and gable. Few houses that have no years to speak of have achieved such a flavour of romance. There was originally a small chantry here which in the Middle Ages was apparently re-named after Guy of Warwick, who, in spite of his character as a kind of *genius loci*, had no existence in fact, but is probably the hero of an Anglo-Norman romance. The chantry at the Dissolution, with its small endowments, went the way of all such things, and figured as an inconsiderable little house and property, changing owners frequently.

In the middle of the eighteenth century it came into the hands of some rich West Indians—the Greatheads —and ultimately devolved, through their heiress, on the Percy family, Lord Algernon being the present owner. The house is in the main hardly a century old and owes its reputation in the tourist world to its beautiful situation above these leafy broads of the Avon, and to its name. The mill facing it is no older than the house, but has achieved a venerable aspect and environment with such remarkable success that when its wheel turns on a hot summer's day, such as the one I encountered it upon, and the cool water pours frothing into the glassy lake beneath the spreading trees, it is good to linger by, and is in fact the most picturesque of the many and generally much older mills for which the Avon is so justly famous. Its character as a show mill, to be sure, is rather painfully obvious. Refreshments and postcards are in great evidence about it, and as the wheel revolves, a lurking suspicion that it is merely showing off and doing its part in the scene fixes itself irresistibly though perhaps unjustly upon the mind. As Guy's Cliff is a private residence and not a show house, nor yet an old one, it would be irrelevant to say anything more about it, with Kenilworth ahead of us.

In regard to the latter one may wonder how much Scott has had to do with putting the public on such familiar terms with its name. There is no ruin in England frequented by such continuous flocks of people. One is almost surprised to find a town of Kenilworth, so utterly have the ruins filled the public eye. But there it is, and a tolerably long one, extending over a mile, though only one street thick. "The King's Arms", where Scott himself stayed in 1820 when he came here to double the fame of the castle, is still standing. The latter is at the far end of the long town, which has a village flavour, rather, from end to end and never

GUYS CLIFF

once looks seriously town-like, nor, one must truthfully add, never once picturesque. The facilities for eating and drinking are fairly continuous, and I should think that the castle, if not the chief industry of the place, is a leading one. It is an odd reflection that the ruins of a castle will occasionally support a larger tributary population than the same place in the hey-day of its glory.

The desultory and inconsequent-looking town, however, has come to an end before you reach the castle, and a sort of village green takes its place, around which are more houses of refreshment and a general sensation of picture postcards. As I drew up to Kenilworth I could not help thinking of Caerphilly, the largest castle ruin in Wales, and its deserted look, half a dozen local school-children, perhaps, playing like ants among its huge towers ; or again of Norham upon Tweed, with its blood-drenched turf ; or of Ludlow, with its resounding tales of strife. Kenilworth, it is quite true, as the handbooks tell, was one of the most important castles in England. It was a great centre and depot, coveted as a trust by the greatest nobles in England, popular as a safe and central residence for successive kings. As a ruin, exhibiting on a great and perfect scale the Norman fortress and the Tudor residence, it is not surpassed in magnitude, and yet one thinks somehow, as one wanders about it upon the green turf beneath the towering red fragments, of successive centuries of pageants and tournaments, of functions and great " house parties ", if one may use the term. I should be inclined to think that Warwickshire was the safest spot in Europe from the thirteenth to the seventeenth centuries, which is not to say that alarms were wholly absent, for there was one great siege of Kenilworth in the Barons' War, when the party of Simon de Montfort, after his death at Evesham, defended themselves with valour and success.

The site of the castle had no importance worth considering till the time of Henry I, and then its works and consequence steadily increased, sometimes under royal, sometimes under baronial ownership. John was here frequently, and Henry III, with his constant troubles, naturally turned his attention to Kenilworth and built extensively, among other things making the great lake, which was such a feature both in the defence and adornment of the castle. In 1244 Simon de Montfort, first Earl of Leicester, was made governor, and a few years afterwards the castle was granted to that famous person and his wife for their lives. In view of coming troubles he had made the great fortress as secure as possible, and so it became a leading strategic point in the campaign which ended the earl's life on the field of Evesham. While his son was in France, trying to raise reinforcements, Henry de Hastings commanded the remnant of the de Montfort party within the castle, who, animated perhaps by their very despair of obtaining reasonable conditions, held out for two months against every device, even to covering the lake with war boats, that the besiegers could bring against them, securing in the end a surrender on honourable terms. From henceforward Kenilworth comes to one's mind as a place of feasting and pageant, varied occasionally by becoming the jail-house of some royal or noble offender. Edward II was brought here as prisoner, and within these walls resigned his crown. Almost every king was here, keeping Christmas or Easter, or collecting troops for war, till Elizabeth granted the castle to her favourite, Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester, who at once set about building on a greater scale. He is said to have spent £60,000 in these additions, an immense sum for the period, and he entertained the queen on four different occasions, a fact with which every schoolboy, thanks to Scott, is familiar

KENILWORTH CASTLE.

or ought to be. But his Amy Robsart, who has so deeply stirred our compassion and indignation, is not the lady who actually bore that name and was also Leicester's wife. I remember being profoundly moved as a boy on discovering what I took to be Amy Robsart's paternal home in the obscure village of Lidcote, then in my neighbourhood on the northern slopes of Exmoor and on the banks of the Bray, for thus by name and situation Scott took a fancy to indicate it.

But this lady was not the daughter of a knight of Devonshire but of Norfolk, and was publicly married to Lord Robert Dudley, fifth son of the Duke of Northumberland in the presence of Edward VI, in the year 1550, at the age of eighteen. She seems, however, to have lived for the most part in the country, while her husband attended at court. In 1560, says the late Mr. Turner, the Warwickshire antiquary, she was residing at Cumnor Place, which was rented from the son of Dr. George Owen, who had been physician to Henry VIII, and received this church property as a grant at the Dissolution. Staying with her at the time were the owner's wife and another lady. On Sunday, 8th September, all the servants were sent to Abingdon Fair, and when they came back their mistress was discovered lying at the foot of the stairs with her neck broken. An inquest was held, but nothing transpired to suggest violence. Amy, therefore, had been dead many years before the festivities at Kenilworth. Leicester, however, was by that time actually married to Lady Douglas Sheffield, a secret alliance which he seems afterwards to have endeavoured to repudiate. The last visit of the queen, that of 1575, lasted a fortnight, and was apparently the most splendid in its accompaniments. Bridges were built, the lake lit up, while symbolic figures met her with offerings and orations. There were fireworks, bear baitings, Moorish

dancing and plays, and 320 hogsheads of beer alone were consumed. Leicester's marriage arrangements were as unstable as the rest of his character. For in the lifetime of his second wife he married a third, Lettice, the widow of Lord Essex. And when the glittering courtier died, or rather when his brother Ambrose, who inherited a life interest, died, there was great fighting over the Kenilworth property between the representatives of the two wives, with the result that the castle again went to the Crown. Charles I was here on his way to Edgehill. But during the Protectorate the lake was run off and the buildings dismantled and the estate divided among Parliamentary officers. At the Restoration it was granted to Lord Hyde, the historian, whose descendants, the Earls of Clarendon, own it still.

That the ruins of Kenilworth are among the largest and stateliest in England will be readily understood by a glance at our artist's sketch. The richness of their colouring, too, adds no little to their beauty. The keep, the original portion built at the end of the twelfth century, is seen on the right of the picture and is known as Cæsar's Tower. It is a very large four-sided block of masonry, three stories high, and flanked at each angle with massive towers. Higher up the slope to the west most of the buildings are two centuries later, reared in place of earlier ones, and among them are the remains of the great hall. Opposite Cæsar's Tower and on the south side, conspicuous with its Tudor windows, is the large block of buildings built by Leicester and named after him. The outer walls of the great court, as will be seen, are fairly perfect. Beyond them lie the meadows which formed the bottom of the great lake which, till the Commonwealth, extended round two sides of the castle, and the extent of which can be easily traced as you stand on the

walls of the higher raised western portion of the ruins.

Though Kenilworth has nothing like the martial record of many castles of far less size and fame, its intimate associations with so many sovereigns, their triumphs and their trials, give ample food for reflection as one wanders around the intricate mass of stately red ruins, here perfect to the height of their vanished battlements, there little more than the foundations of chambers once echoing to the sounds of life and gaiety. What would one give to listen for half an hour to the table-talk in the great banqueting-hall in the days, let us say, of Henry VII, or again in those of Robert Dudley; to the tones of voice and accent,the subjects of conversation, the external attitude of men and women to one another, and a thousand things to which the contemporary pen can give us no clue. I fancy there would be a good many surprises in store ! The pageant manager of to-day may reproduce the dresses, but anything else, ah, who can say, I have my doubts that any of us could get near the atmosphere of these ancients or their point of view.

There is little doubt but that a hundred subtleties of manner, tricks, expression, intonation, that go to differentiate one type from another have been lost and replaced by fresh ones. We can really form no notion how the most cultivated type of Elizabethan Englishman spoke. We know more or less the words he used, but as to tones or emphases, with which he gave expression to them, all is darkness. Of course we do know that a certain number of old English words retain their original meaning in the rural districts of the older States of America : " Well, I do admire " for " Well, I am surprised " (North Carolina), a covey of partridges or any wild things, " *using in* " (*i.e.* habitually frequenting) a certain field, an archaism found

in seventeenth century literature. "Clever", again, for genial or agreeable; "I am *right* glad", or, "I am *mighty* sorry", and many more. I have often amused myself by wondering how many, too, of certain small subtle differences of manner, habit, and attitude, outside those obviously due to different circumstances and climate, among the Virginians, for instance, being good subjects for comparison, may not be survivals of the English generations that mainly sent them out. England in such matters has been always changing and readily susceptible to influences from its social and commercial centres. Virginia, on the other hand, till quite recently was a provincial community absolutely isolated from all the world. It had very little intercourse with the mother-country after the first three or four generations, and received practically no immigration. So its people could scarcely have picked up anything of this kind between the seventeenth century and the middle of the nineteenth. At any rate, to those who know England with the intimacy of a native, and one of these old States with the intimacy of some years, there is a wonderful field of interest and scope for speculation. But to how small a number have circumstances given this exceptional opportunity, and of those few how many have either the equipment or the desire to pursue it.

Stoneleigh Abbey has been the property of Lord Leigh and of his ancestors since the sixteenth century, and lies on the Avon, but a mile or two from Kenilworth. The stream, however, is now such a small one that it would be more in order to say that the Avon meandered through the deer park. It does this, too, with more life and buoyancy than in any part of its natural course known to me, running over gravelly rapids into lively pools, and swishing under

GATEHOUSE, STONELEIGH ABBEY

the hollow roots of pendant oaks with almost the vivacity of a Herefordshire grayling stream. The present mansion is a large oblong building of about the year 1700, in the Italian style. As its affix implies, Stoneleigh was church property and was sold by the grantee to Sir Thomas Leigh and Sir Rowland Hill, London merchants and aldermen, and both Shropshire men, though the family of the former were emigrants thither from the better known Cheshire clan. However, Sir Thomas Leigh not only got his share of Stoneleigh, but married the other share in the person of Sir Rowland's niece and heiress, getting a great deal more besides. The old abbey buildings were in great part demolished, and such as remain have been for the most part converted into offices. The village and church stand about a mile from the lodge, and the road thither crosses the Avon by a remarkable and quaint old fourteenth century bridge, built, it is said, by the monks of Stoneleigh, and thence beneath an avenue of extremely imposing and ancient trees. Stoneleigh, unlike so many parishes in this neighbourhood, has still its ancient church with a partly Norman tower, a decorated nave, and a Norman chancel, on the north side of which is a mortuary chapel of the Leigh family. In the chancel is a large marble monument to Alice, Duchess Dudley, and her daughter Alicia. The former was a daughter of Sir Thomas Leigh, first owner here, and married the son of Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester. Charles I created her a duchess and she lived to be ninety. But the Avon has now shrunk to so modest a stream, that neither the exigencies of space nor the fact that, with the single undermentioned exception, very little of interest gathers about its sequestered banks, need be pleaded for concluding our pilgrimage at Rugby.

CHAPTER XII

RUGBY

THE fact of Rugby School being seated upon Shakespeare's Avon, though nine people out of ten will most probably be surprised to hear it, provides an opportunity for saying something concerning the story of a school whose fame in America, outside, at any rate, a small, travelled, and cosmopolitan circle, stands or used to stand next to Eton or vaguely coupled with it. Constantly in my own experience they were the only two great English schools known even by name across the Atlantic. Sometimes Rugby was actually the only one. This of course is due to Arnold, though mainly, it must be admitted, to Arnold, as he and Rugby appear through the medium of the immortal pages of "Tom Brown". So Americans at least are, I know, interested in Rugby, and may perhaps, as well as some others, appreciate a brief relation of its rise from obscurity to fame. While English readers are more familiar with the actual position of Rugby as one of the higher group of old public schools, they too may have some touch of curiosity to know how it grew, fortuitously, as it were, to be so. Its development in this respect was similar to that of Harrow, and Harrow alone, though not quite so conspicuous in a social way, nor so rapid in point of numbers, as John Lyons's foundation, which had the advantage of a singularly healthy and at that time picturesque situation near the metropolis.

Harrow was appealing to the rich merchants of

London and the aristocracy of the country, in rivalry with Eton and Westminster in the eighteenth century, when Rugby was attracting only the squires and the like of the Midlands. Many other grammar schools in their several districts were then, to be sure, doing very much the same, but none, I think, went quite so far afield. Shrewsbury, later on, by two brilliant teachers, attracted clever boys from far counties, but the school remained otherwise comparatively small, cramped, and ill-equipped.

Most of the other well-known grammar schools acquired little more than provincial reputations. Many of them have since collapsed; others remain useful middle-class schools. A few have blossomed out into flourishing public schools of the modern type, and have the consolation of their age for home consumption, though the world knows or cares little about their antiquity. It esteems them merely as good public schools, a little way behind the greater Victorian schools, founded largely on the model of Rugby which got in ahead of them and became powerful, well-equipped, and influential, while they were struggling out of the grammar-school stage. Rugby, however, "found itself" long before this, and has now the secure reputation not merely of being a great but an ancient public school in the world's esteem. A would-be knowledgeable person will sometimes venture the assertion that Rugby was not a public school till Arnold's time, but this would only be because he did not know quite enough. Arnold of course lifted Rugby into the first rank, but it was a school with something of a national clientele, a social one too, not mainly based on teaching grounds like Shrewsbury, long before Arnold. In this particular it has a place to itself historically. It followed in the steps of Harrow till Arnold's day. It had never equalled Harrow in general

distinction or in average numbers, but it approached it much nearer than any other expanded grammar school; and then, eighty years ago, at a lean period of public-school repute, made such a tremendous all-round reputation that everything concerning it, including its antecedents, got something of a halo, and one that abides.

Eton, Westminster, and Winchester as great mediaeval foundations for a large number of "poor scholars", *i.e.* poor gentlemen mostly, were national institutions of stable fortunes, only dependent on the caprice of the more wealthy for such further prosperity and reputation as then accrued from the patronage of liberally paying non-foundationers. The two first, as every one knows, became the aristocratic schools of England, rivalled as early as the mid-eighteenth century by the once obscure grammar school on Harrow Hill. Winchester, socially unexceptionable, but hardly "aristocratic" in the same sense, for some mysterious reason, and always limited in numbers by circumstances, held its own in other respects as inferior to none. One must banish from the mind the present state of things in counting the small group of public schools, already enumerated, into which Rugby won its way. For the ancient London day-schools were little more than teaching shops, and though labelled in Blue books for technical reasons "public schools", with the exception of the old Charterhouse, which fluctuated prodigiously, had nothing of the public-school atmosphere, as we understand it, about them, nor yet any social kudos whatsoever. With the present large number of public schools, subtly graded beyond a doubt, but in every way meriting that indefinable but well understood term, the situation has completely altered. Every well-to-do parent in England, though he may sometimes have misgivings on practical accounts, for his own reputation (one might almost put it this way!)

and always as a necessary social equipment for his son, feels that a public school is indispensable. But I am quite sure that very many English public-school men themselves entirely forget, if they ever knew, how very modern all this prestige of a public-school education is. Before Dr. Arnold's time, approximately speaking, there was almost none of it. Many of the highly placed considered Eton or Westminster too rough and democratic assemblages for their precious heirs, who had tutors till they went, much younger than now, to the university. The squires and professional classes allied with them had many objections—transportation, political and religious convictions, and so forth. In short, a distinct minority of the prosperous classes, and not perhaps without reason, approved of public schools. So the youth who entered the university or the army, say in the time of the Napoleon wars, without such antecedents, experienced nothing whatever of the almost uncomfortable singularity which now attaches to him, for most of his contemporaries were in the same boat. Whether he rode his pony daily into Warwick or Stratford grammar schools, or was the torment of a domestic tutor, his field sports were no bad alternative perhaps for the sort of pastime that then filled the leisure hours of most public-schools boys at the time of Waterloo and before. Even so, no doubt, he missed a good deal in some ways, though he was spared in others; but then fashion was much divided upon this point, which makes all the difference. When the first of a swarm of near relatives of the present writer went to Rugby twenty years after Waterloo, there was much misgiving and fluttering in the dovecotes, and remonstrances poured in from well-meaning friends, though Rugby was beginning to be famous. For not quite the same reason a lady, whom I can well remember in her old age, burst into

tears when her first-born and afterwards distinguished son won a scholarship at Winchester, so terrible was the reputation for everything that wrings a mother's heart at that then Spartan school.

Now Laurence Sherriff, alderman of London and grocer by appointment to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth, was a native of Rugby who had gone up to London as an obscure youth and made some fame and a most substantial fortune. He was granted a coat of arms in 1559, and inhabited a well-appointed mansion in Newgate known as the "King's Grocer's House". With a proper affection for his native town, he set apart in his will £100 for the founding of a free school and almshouse there, and even took some steps towards its inauguration. A little later, and only three weeks before his death in 1567, he altered this legacy to a third interest in Conduit Close, a field of some 24 acres, adjoining the city of London in the district its still familiar name sufficiently indicates. This alteration, of small moment at the time and intended as an equivalent for the other, not as a greater benefaction, was the making of Rugby School. There was no particular financial increment in a mere hundred pounds. But the Conduit Close property, then worth in all about £60 a year, grew in a few generations to be worth nearly two hundred times as much. There was also a charge on some property at Brownsover of £16 a year. Besides this, a house in Rugby belonging to the donor was given to the Trust as a master's lodging; also £50 in money to build a schoolroom and quarters for four poor men, who were to have sevenpence a week for maintenance. The salary of the master was £12 per annum, and he was to be a Master of Arts if possible. Thus was Rugby School founded, not differing essentially in scale, method, and motive from a hundred other

BURGHCLERE MILL

country grammar schools. It was intended for the free education of the boys of Rugby and Brownsover, the former, with a population then of about 500, not being so vastly greater than its now obscure neighbour, under the title of The Free School and Almshouses of Laurence Sherriff of London, grocer. The benevolent grocer, man of commercial distinction and weight though he undoubtedly was in the city of London, committed one serious oversight in this comparatively, as it might seem, small undertaking. He appointed, to be sure, two admirable trustees, intimate friends, substantial and upright men, but without further provision at their death. The charge became in a fashion hereditary, and the inevitable happened. Unscrupulous heirs began to apply the gradually increasing funds to their own use, to starve the master and neglect the buildings which were nobody's business,—lawsuits took place, commissions of inquiry were appointed, and it became a chronic struggle to drag the money, or part of it, out of the hands of those who held the property charged with the school income. All kinds of frauds were attempted or perpetrated. In spite of this, prior to the Civil War, many good masters had occupied Laurence Sherriff's modest schoolhouse, and a good few of their boys had proceeded to the universities. The financial troubles and trials of the school, in spite of new trustees who did practically nothing, are curious reading. The inhabitants of the town seem at this period to have chosen the master, who in his turn had to fight the heirs of Laurence Sherriff for his princely salary. Ultimately the scandal waxed so serious that the chief of these unfaithful stewards was prosecuted to a successful conviction, flung into prison, and made to disgorge £250. Meanwhile the almshouses created infinite rivalry among the citizens, who occasionally came to

blows in forcing their respective nominees into a vacancy. A local squire, whose descendants are still *in situ*, seems to have practically controlled the charity for a long time during the seventeenth century; a dependent of his own, an able-bodied youth of twenty, among others being quartered there as a pensioner for several years. But, with all this, things advanced steadily, if slowly. A new generation of trustees did their duty, and it is curious to note that the Leighs of Stoneleigh, who have been so active in modern times among the school's governors, were at the Restoration practically the nominators of the head master. William Holyoak, one of the Magdalen fellows ejected by James II, gave Rugby its first outside reputation. The school rose to over a hundred, and many additions for boarders with other improvements were made. A list of noblemen and baronets educated there is extant, while many less socially exalted Rugbeians acquired fame. Speech day then first became an important local function, celebrated in a playhouse which the town boasted of, and several of the pieces recited there are preserved, while the boys also entertained the neighbourhood with dramatic performances. Holyoak reigned for forty years. His income had grown to £70, but boarders were of course now numerous, while the trustees so greatly honoured him that he was allowed to hold several livings, and when he died he bequeathed his library to the school. With a normal interval another brilliant master, one Crossfield, was appointed, and in the year 1742 fifty new boys were entered.

The school was now bursting its old bounds. The original schoolhouse, which is said to have resembled that now well-known one at Stratford, was condemned by the architects, and so it was decided to move. The London property, now covered with buildings, had so increased that £2000 was easily raised upon it. The

manor house of Rugby, with garden, fields, and farm, occupying the site of the present school at the fringe of the town, was purchased and adapted sufficiently for the moment. The new Rugby School opened in 1750, and the famous " Close ", developed from the enclosed paddocks of the manor farm, came into use, being for some time known as " Paradise ". At the old school, the churchyard, the playground for the parish youth, it must be remembered, in those days throughout England and Wales, was the sole athletic arena of the Rugby boy. No further progress was made till 1778, when Dr. James, an Etonian and King's scholar, took the reins and lifted Rugby up yet another stage. This accomplished man remodelled the school upon Eton lines —tutors, fags, præpositors, Eton books, and all the rest of it. A good deal of building and re-adapting was done too. Among other things, separate form rooms were created, while several dames' boarding-houses also sprang into being, and the numbers of boys went up to 250.

Though Rugby was the resort most obviously of the prosperous classes, particularly the squires' sons of the Midland counties, it is interesting to note that £30 a year was the total annual cost of a boy. Of this only sixteen guineas was charged for board, with a trifle extra for a study ! James, in his letters, doubts if the schoolhouse covers expenses. In half a century this figure had trebled at least. The historian of Rugby School, from of course abundant documentary evidence, gives us many glimpses of the Rugby boy of this last quarter of the eighteenth century. Nimrod the famous sporting writer, with Macready the actor and others, have described at more or less length their Rugby days. Nimrod (Apperley) for four years shared a study with Samuel Butler the brilliant scholar and afterwards famous head master of Shrewsbury. According to his friend, he spent

most of his time reading novels or fishing, but in form electrified his companions and delighted the head master with his rendering of the classics. Public-school boys for the most part in those days pursued their home amusements with the inevitable result and further zest of constant poaching rows. Fishing in the Avon with rod, night-line, or casting-net seems to have been a favourite pastime at Rugby. A common duty of the earlier fags was to rise betimes and run a mile or two into the country to examine their master's night-line. There was no football, but Nimrod tells us that cricket was in high repute, and never had he seen neater batters or surer bowlers than some of his schoolfellows, though he had watched, he says, some of the best performers of his day. When coaching approached its zenith, the sporting instinct of the Rugby boy responded ardently within his narrow bounds. Rude conveyances were contrived by the school carpenter, and the mighty of the community drove long teams of fags about the country, not sparing, we may be sure, the lash. There was much house rivalry, we are told, as to the merits of the respective teams. Some boys kept guns surreptitiously, like Sir Robert Peel at Harrow. Others, Dr. James complained, got his horses out sometimes by stealth and lamed them over fences. The external appearance of the Rugby boy of that period is presented to us as tricked out in a stiff hat, with band or buckle, waistcoat of scarlet cloth, knee-breeches of wash-leather, doeskin, or nankeen, with worsted or silk stocking and buckled shoes. Muslin cravats were worn, and in bed the universal nightcap. At least a week was occupied in assembling and dismissing the school at the beginning and end of the half-year — the latter period occupied in breaking windows and drinking unlimited punch. A long

list of distinguished names are placed to the credit of James who, after sixteen years, retired to the living of Upton-on-Severn. Rugby was now established as next to the four senior schools, though Charterhouse, in its East-end environment, is rather difficult to place. It makes no difference that under Ingles, another Eton and King's man, the school lost in numbers, for the older schools also fluctuated amazingly. Ingles, though of high attainments and character, was a dismal and severe person, and a serious rebellion occurred in his time. Masters were barred out and bonfires made of the school desks, after which the boys retired to the " Island " in the Close, the moat around it being in those days full of water. Pursued by special constables, townsmen, and farmers, and the Riot Act read, it was not till some soldiers were called in who waded the moat that these young rebels surrendered at discretion, to experience a very orgy of castigation! In the Napoleon wars a large number of Rugbeians gained high distinction, and during the invasion-scares, when local volunteers were everywhere organizing, the boys formed two strong companies. Uniformed in blue lapelled coats with scarlet facings, and armed with wooden broadswords, they naturally, for lack of an alien foe, indulged in internecine strife, and the " Island " was once more the scene of attack and defence.

In 1806 Arnold's immediate predecessor was appointed. It is curious to note that on this occasion Samuel Butler, who, with his successor Kennedy, gave Shrewsbury two generations of scholastic distinction, was a candidate, and still more curious that though an old Rugbeian with a statutory prior right was passed over, as is supposed, for his over-severity upon the banks of the Severn. John Wooll, " a perfect gentleman and disciplinarian ", and now preferred

to Butler, was an Oxonian Wykehamist and arrived at Rugby in a tandem, a postilion mounted on the leader. The new chief was in all ways a success. The numbers rose to 381, making Rugby the second largest of the public schools, and there were nine assistant masters, about the usual proportion at that period. And this is worth noting, in view of a vague popular delusion that, prior to Arnold, Rugby was only a well-known grammar school. In the cast of a play performed by the boys in 1807, with Macready as the star, nearly all the actors made their mark in various paths of life. Macready himself, with a friend, on one occasion hired a chaise and drove all the way to Leicester to see Richard III acted, and got back in time for first school, apparently undetected.

But the great event of Wooll's reign, in a material sense, was the almost entire rebuilding of the school, a work commenced in 1808. James had been crowded even in his time, and put to a good many temporary shifts to house his numerous forms. The trustees had now accumulations amounting to £40,000, and their income besides was £3500 a year from property. The new buildings—cloistered, towered, and turreted,—in the main such as the visitor now sees, took six years in building. The homely predecessor to the present chapel was also erected. The Close, hitherto still hedged with paddocks, was thrown into the 8 acres now known as Old Bigside; the noble elms, so shattered by the storms at the close of the last century, left to mark in part the line of the old hedgerows. Other alterations, not material here, took place then and later. The year of Waterloo roughly coincides with this new epoch in the life of Rugby. The boys themselves took an active part in levelling the Close for cricket and incidentally for football, which had by no means developed into the

famous game of later days, indeed very far from it. As recalled by a Rugbeian, well remembered by hundreds of still middle-aged men, running with the ball, the essence of the after game was distinctly tabooed. The origin, according to the same eye-witness, of a sport that has now encompassed the world was the reckless defiance of this rule by a single youth, who rushed forward with the ball under his arm and set or inspired the revolution. In Wooll's day football at Rugby was merely the desultory game, with a strong, pugnacious, and personal significance, that it was at the other great schools, and in a less serious fashion at grammar schools. Two leaders picked up sides in the old manner, and when individuality had ceased to count, the rank and file, or the fags who chose to play, were parted in wholesale fashion. The top hats and coats were laid in a heap, and the game was played till the school bell rang, summoning not only the combatants but a yet greater number, probably from more distant fields of enterprise, associated with fish and game and also public-houses. For the young Briton then always liked his beer and very often his punch, as his seniors enjoyed their port without apology. Their descendants may or may not suffer for it, but there is no evidence that they were themselves anæmic or effete either then or afterwards. The fighting power of Great Britain was then at its zenith. In great achievement and prestige the little island, with its few millions of souls, offered a spectacle such as the world had never seen, and Rugbeians were already playing by no means inconspicuous parts in the drama. It must have been a fine thing to be a Briton in those days—conqueror of the ocean by seamanship and bulldog courage ; on land the only soldiers that Napoleon recognized as equals, man for man, with his

own inspired battalions. The formidable Englishman of Napoleon's vision was altogether another sort of being, it is to be feared, from the self-absorbed, luxurious game-playing, slightly hysterically degenerate, that appears to fill the hopeful eyes of our future conquerors.

But the Rugby boys, when Englishmen were at a high premium in the world, as I have said, drank punch and beer like their seniors, and fought sanguinary battles under the rules of the prize-ring, and did all sorts of heinous things that would scandalize the less developed modern youth, whose life's ambition for the moment is most likely centred on his house eleven. In a boy's school life nowadays no test of his physical courage worthy of mention is ever once applied. That went out with the abolition of fighting, of severe caning, and of serious legalized hacking at the Rugby game of football, in the sixties, speaking broadly, at all English schools. The fifth of November could hardly have found a more appropriate place of celebration than Rugby, seeing that the conspirators and their friends and sympathizers assembled, as it will be remembered, in the town and neighbouring heath of Dunsmuir to await the crisis. Ferocious fights between the town and the boys took place regularly over the ignition of the great bonfire that was piously laid by the townspeople. The point contested here was definite enough. The match was not applied in the ordinary course till evening, after the school "locking up". The object of the boys was to light the bonfire prematurely, while they were still at large and could enjoy the blaze. With the fighting strength of the town marshalled in defence, and the schoolboys in attack, a very pretty battle royal, in which little quarter was given, was waged upon each recurring anniversary. Combustibles of all kinds were prepared beforehand, and armed with these and headed by the

champion bruisers of the school, bearing torches, the attacking hordes fell upon the civic ranks that formed in a dense circle around their pile of faggots. In addition to the immortal " Tom Brown ", which dealt with a somewhat more orderly and organized society than that presided over by Wooll, there are a great many reminiscences of Rugby schooldays both of the Arnold and the pre-Arnold period extant in print. But as a matter of fact the present writer, for reasons not relevant here, has possibly heard as much as anybody of a later generation now living of the Arnold epoch from the lips of many who were prominent among his pupils, and that too up till a comparatively recent day. Such a confidence may seem perhaps superfluous, as such tales would be altogether too meticulous for these pages. But as " Tom Brown " is a classic, one or two remarks may not be untimely. In the first place one has been confronted through life with the assertion in newspapers, or from persons of more or less one's own generation, that this character was so and so, and that was such a one. The fact is generally derived too from some special and unerring source! Probably there have even been old schoolfellows of Mr. Hughes's who have entertained themselves and their friends by fitting names to types, and grown into such faith by constant reiteration. In every book of the kind, above all in one so famous, the habit of crossing "t's" and dotting "i's" that the author himself never intended to cross or to dot, is an incurable and harmless and even natural propensity. But I can only say that of the late Judge Hughes's contemporaries in age and standing, in short, prominent members of the community he describes, I have for sufficient reasons been intimately associated with several till the end of their lives, and discussed the book and period with many more. And that not one of these but utterly ridiculed this putting of

names to " Tom Brown's " life-like friends and enemies, highly as they appraised them as types. Nor was it very likely that an author who lived afterwards, as did Judge Hughes, so much in touch with Rugby and his own school contemporaries and friends, would put any of them bodily into a book. On the contrary, with the freedom and liberty that fiction gives, he would take particular care not to do so. But that men with pardonable vanity should fit themselves or be fitted by their descendants on to the characters in so famous a work is not unnatural, and this amiable weakness will probably grow as time goes on. Hence a word in season for whatever it may be worth, and it seems to me such testimony is sufficiently conclusive. The "young master", who holds serious discourse with the hero on the cricket-field before he goes up to Oxford, was quite possibly intended for Cotton, the second Headmaster of Marlborough and Bishop of Calcutta. It is at least quite certain that " Bill ", the schoolhouse porter, who gave warning of the doctor's approach, it will be remembered, at the fight between Tom and Williams, was William Voss, who spent the latter half of a long life as lodge porter at Marlborough. There could be no escaping from that. Though only mentioned as an article of furniture or a tree might be mentioned, and for that very reason beyond suspicion as to identity, Bill greatly enjoyed the indisputable distinction. Hundreds of successive new boys at the Wiltshire school gazed with almost awe at the rubicund face and portly form of the veteran who had actually figured in the famous fight between Tom Brown and Slogger Williams. Of course he could put names to all the characters in the book, and had known the originals well, his precision and confidence in this respect increasing with his years. And this was much more than his master could do, though a personal friend of the author of the book and an old

schoolfellow. This is no place to enlarge on the familiar story of Arnold's Rugby, even did space permit. But as the average man is vaguely inclined to fancy that Rugby began with that great headmaster in the sense that Uppingham and its thirty boys began with Thring, I have ventured this brief narration of its earlier story. Out of this one salient fact may at least be taken to heart, namely, that from two to four hundred boys, of the same degree and quality as the mass who went to Harrow or Winchester, were gathered mainly in boarding-houses under the successive reigns of James, Ingles, and Wooll, and thrived or suffered under precisely the same half-lax, half-rigid discipline. Dr. Wooll, though a small and genial man, had a tireless arm, and could flog a whole lower form of forty boys straight off the reel, it seems, without a sign of exhaustion.

From infancy to years of discretion the present writer was the frequent inmate of a household whose head had been one of Wooll's sixth form. And if his oft-told reminiscences or the writer's memory of them will not pass as scientific history, the annals of Rugby School are there at any rate to bear them out, and for all to read who care to. The public schools, of which Rugby beyond question was held as one, though, as already mentioned, not at that time regarded as an indispensable introduction to life, were yet further under a distinct cloud when Arnold came upon the scene. He was fortunate in Rugby as an instrument. It was sufficiently large and important to work upon without being hampered by invincible traditions. Eton would probably for many reasons have been too big a job. Westminster was hopeless from its situation. Winchester, his own school, was the very slave of custom and inelastic in construction. Harrow alone would in all likelihood have proved suitable for his experiments, and responded, as Rugby

responded, to his reforming touch. But Rugby, the junior of the five in prestige, was after all the most eligible. Situated far from London, but in the heart of England, it had at once the advantages of clean, rural surroundings, together with a central position, an advantage not to be despised in the coaching period. Everybody knows Arnold's methods, for they were practically those that have now long existed at every great school in the country: A sense of honour instead of fear of the birch; a more friendly feeling between boys and masters; a sixth form with obligations and responsibilities besides mere privileges. But there is no occasion to pursue this subject. Visitors to Rugby will seldom probably trouble their heads about such things. But many, and certainly most of those from across the Atlantic, will enter the old pre-Arnold quadrangle, and the schoolhouse dining-hall, before whose capacious fireplace the famous roasting scene in Tom Brown is laid. They will duly make their pilgrimage to the hero's study, which at least is a thing of certainty, and not as Shakespeare's desk at Stratford grammar school, or Geoffrey of Monmouth's reputed sanctum beside the Wye, problematical or legendary. They will look out, too, for the turret door descending from the doctor's study into the Close, recalling an incident in that book which for many of them is the inspiring cause of their pilgrimage to Rugby. They will assuredly stroll a little in the Close itself amid the survivors of those once numerous elms that but two decades agone made these classic meads the glory of Rugby; the one picturesque and stately scene that redeemed and more than redeemed the slightly commonplace though not undignified erections of successive administrators of Laurence Sherriff's trust, and the undeniably commonplace atmosphere of the little Midland

town spreading northward from its gates. It is a matter of common knowledge that the very earliest impressions of one's life sometimes abide in the vision with preternatural clarity. The temptation to record the unimportant fact that the football on Old Bigside at Rugby is the one that thus above all other remains with me is irresistible, while standing here upon the very spot. Nor has any amount of after familiarity with very similar scenes elsewhere dimmed the freshness with which it still comes back; the long, loose array of black-coated and, I think, top-hatted fags "standing in goal" according to the curious ancient custom. The glimpses caught between them of the Homeric contest, the battle of giants, as it seemed to a child, a shifting hurly-burly of jerseys, with their lateral stripes of blue or red; the gorgeous peaked caps of crimson, blue, or green velvet, laced and tasselled with silver cord, and in those days worn in action, now vulgarized but then unknown outside Rugby Close. The background of tall elms shedding their yellow leaves into that murky November air so chronic in the Midlands; the faint smell of mud from the soft, much-trampled turf; the dull thud of the then more frequent drop-kick; the prolonged and prodigious scrimmages of three or four score combatants. All these impressions—these sights and sounds and smells—survive in an absurd degree later and greater intimacies with such familiar things, and I only venture to record them because they come from Rugby Close in the last year or two of its exclusive possession of them, and a period so deplorably remote that there may even still have been a stray Old Rugbeian joining in the fray who had been in the school under Arnold.

Of the many new buildings, including the imposing fabric which covers the site of the plain old chapel where Arnold preached to Tom Brown and his friends,

erected in the later nineteenth century, there is no occasion to speak. Rugby School at this active building period delivered itself over to Mr. Butterfield, fired perhaps by his achievement of Keble College, Oxford. Its chief historian says these buildings " must be seen to be appreciated ", with which enigmatic piece of criticism we will leave them to the verdict of the curious stranger, who will possibly be of the opinion that the yet later efforts of this prosperous foundation are altogether in a happier vein.

The old town of Rugby is assuredly commonplace enough. Laurence Sherriff's almshouses, where the original schoolhouse stood fronting the market-place, relieves somewhat the uninspiring but inoffensive vista that carries the eye down the straight, narrow High Street to where the lofty, turreted gateway of the present school makes a rather imposing and quite felicitous termination. Rugby was in fact rather a poor little town of some thousand and odd souls till the coaching period added to its importance. The expansion of the school, railroad industries, and a moderate residential increment from hunting and more recent polo facilities have greatly extended its borders. If Leland were turned loose again in England he would doubtless note it as " a nete and pratey town". But its heart is all that is in the least likely to interest the visitor, and that too almost wholly from its scholastic associations. The churches are new or rebuilt, save the rather remarkable old fourteenth century tower of St. Andrews.

All the world knows the L. & N. W. R. station, placed at that respectful distance which mistrustful burghers in many places, abetted here by yet more mistrustful pedagogues, insisted on to their later remorse, when the iron horse was a new and fearful thing. Beyond a medley of unsightly railroad works the passenger can still mark the current of the

little Avon where the Swift joins it in the meadows towards Brownsover. And yet more intimately as the train runs out on its northward journey the reinforced but still modest river will display for a brief space its leisurely meanderings by level meads and gently rising woodland. Save for the reputed fact, that Izaak Walton haunted its banks hereabouts, its interest for the wayfarer must depend, like that of the town, on its associations with many past generations of Rugby schoolboys. For in all the periods preceding that later one which witnessed the organization of athletics, the gentle art seems to have been a ruling passion with fag and master, with scholar and sportsman; the further zest of excursions into forbidden ground and stimulating differences with gamekeepers adding no doubt to its fascinations. Samuel Butler we know watched his float assiduously in these gentle streams, composing perhaps those Latin verses which so delighted his brilliant teacher, the first Dr. James, whom he was himself far to excel. His oddly assorted study partner, Charles Apperley, already mentioned, tells us so much and a good deal more besides of this late eighteenth century life at a public school. Doubtless the ill-satisfied stomach of the youngster of those Spartan days had something to say both to his sporting and predatory instinct. For we have a quaint picture of that strange genius, Walter Savage Landor, whose clever and audacious sallies in Greek or Latin were by turn the delight and the torment of the same head-master, till he could stand them no longer and sent the terrible youth packing. But in regard to the Avon, Landor obviously belonged to the pot-hunting school of fishermen, for he is recalled as prowling along its banks, his fag (the father of Charles Reade, the novelist) toiling painfully beside him with a casting-net. After each cast, so far fruitless, made by Landor,

he addressed the astonished new boy in dark, whimsical words as a person of ill-omen, foreshadowing unmistakably a castigation if his evil star remained much longer in the ascendant. Landor then proceeded into a preserve, brushing aside the objection of a remonstrating yokel, and at the first cast hauled in a fine pike. With a triumphant shout he turned to his small henchman, "Welcome to Rugby, sir, welcome! You are a boy of excellent omen. I'll carry the net home, and you shall sup off this fish. It is the joint production of my skill and your favourable star". Next day, this whimsical being, who was the protector of fags, and even paid his own a fixed salary of threepence a week, was summoned for poaching. It is related that on another occasion, when assailed by a farmer whose water he was laying under contribution, he threw his net over him with such precision as to reduce the irate agriculturist to a helpless and ignominious position. With such light trifles anent one or two of the many celebrities of later days who have sported in its waves or on its banks, we may take our leave of the infant Avon. Certainly such distinction as it may have hereabouts in the eyes of a stranger could only be derived from such associations. Between here and the field of Naseby, where it rises, it has contributed many a tale of woe and triumph to the annals of the Pytchley Hunt—the typical, willow-bordered Warwickshire brook of the sporting artist, towards and over which a scarlet-coated cavalcade goes galloping in mad career. But otherwise no stranger is ever likely to trace or to wish to trace the Avon above Rugby. Unlike Edgehill, nobody but a stray historical student, I fancy, ever penetrates to the field of Naseby. And if they did, unless my memory betrays me, they would be quite unlikely to note the fact that from the cold ridge, upon which raged that famous fight, there oozes out the infant spring of Shakespeare's Avon.

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